

**TITLE:** “Greening Physical Therapy”: Application of Sustainability Concepts Into a DPT Curriculum

**SECTION:** Education

**PRESENTATION TYPE:** Special Interest Report - Poster

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**ABSTRACT BODY:**

**Purpose:** To illustrate strategies to integrate concepts of sustainability into a Doctor of Physical Therapy curriculum.

**Description:** Sustainability refers to a process in which societies adapt to live within earth's finite limits in ways that meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. Voted the “Best Higher Education Institution – Green Schools” in 2013 by the National Center for Green Schools, Emory University has identified sustainability as one of its top priorities. While traditional physical therapy curricula incorporate health wellness and prevention strategies and emphasize service learning, few institutions actively integrate concepts of sustainability in their educational content. Aligning with the broader University vision, the Emory Doctor of Physical Therapy Program has developed several methods to implement sustainability initiatives. The goals of these efforts are to: 1) provide introduction to the theoretical constructs of sustainability with emphasis on individual, professional and civic roles; 2) support Emory University as a national leader in sustainability; 3) cultivate mindful practice and “citizen of place” perspectives in the healthcare setting; and 4) foster innovation in the physical therapy profession towards sustainable practices. Underscoring these efforts is a collaborative approach between student and faculty to foster creative solutions to challenging and complex problems, with the expectation that the majority of innovations are student initiated, student driven and student sustained. All students will participate in sustainability self-study exercises during the first semester of coursework. Additional opportunities for further individual study will be available through a directed study elective: *Sustainability Concepts in Physical Therapy Education and Clinical Care*, as well as options for consultative projects on clinical rotations and group efforts during service learning projects. Because each of these options provides the creative freedom to choose the topic, area of focus and patient population, the student drives the content and direction of the learning experience.

**Summary of Use:** Using methods of self-study exercises, consultative projects, service learning and structured directed study electives, concepts of sustainability are being integrated into physical therapy curricula in such a manner to build student's critical thinking skills and foster understanding of the complex interaction of social, economic and environmental impacts on health and wellness in healthcare.

**Importance to Members:** Sustainability provides a framework to understand eco-centric models of care, and the realization that the health of an individual and society cannot be effectively addressed out of context of the environment. The goal of this effort is to broaden the understanding of the concepts of sustainability in the physical therapy profession and create a rich breeding ground for innovative ideas to implement sustainability strategies on local and global levels.

**Keywords:**  
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