

Summary of "Enhancing Student Research Skills"
Information Literacy Grant for 2009-2010

Collaboration of Bonnie Oldham and
Dr. Peter Leininger, PT, PhD, OCS

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This document summarizes the outcomes and success of the Information Literacy Grant, "Enhancing Student Research Skills" with the collaboration of Ms. Bonnie Oldham and Dr. Peter Leininger of the Department of Physical Therapy.

Overall the project was a tremendous success, surpassing the majority of expectations and successfully achieving the goals set prior to the grant project.

- Course name and number – Orthopaedic Physical Therapy PT 713 and Orthopaedic Physical Therapy II PT 714
- Student learning outcomes related to Information Literacy Standards –One of the goals of the mission of The University of Scranton is to "impart to students the importance of gathering, evaluating, disseminating, and applying information using traditional and contemporary methods." In addition to instilling the importance of this skill, students were provided guidance in the process, and provided numerous tips and internet links to utilize in order to more successfully conduct an effective and efficient literature search.
- Assessment plan to determine how student learning outcomes will be evaluated – Students are not only graded on their semester capstone research project but the thoroughness and accuracy of their literature search is assessed.
- Projected Timeline (Spring 2011 – PT 713, and Fall 2012 – PT 714)
- Name of the Library Faculty member with whom I collaborated with – **Bonnie Oldham**

Each year I assign topics in PT 713 (Orthopaedic Physical Therapy I) in the spring semester of the first year of the three year DPT program that typically include orthopedic assessment or rehabilitation topics that are either "cutting edge" or somewhat controversial. The students are usually placed in groups of four or five and they are instructed to provide extensive evidence to support or refute a specific topic employing vigorous literature reviews and critical analysis. Overall the students have performed

fairly well when completing the project but I have found that the student's literature search and literature review is often somewhat haphazard, inefficient and somewhat incomplete. I believe the students on the whole have NOT been provided the effective and efficient search techniques to retrieve the necessary information for their projects.

With this in mind, I met with Bonnie Oldham, Associate Librarian from the Weinberg library to inquire whether she could provide our students with specific training into conducting a successful (efficient and rigorous) literature search. In addition, we discussed the need for strategies and instruction (including on-line instruction and access to links) to better ensure sustainability with these necessary skills for life-long learning and critical analysis in the field of physical therapy.

Ms. Oldham was provided the topics and group assignments for the evidence based practice project. She subsequently contacted each group and scheduled a time to meet individually with each group and discuss the specifics of each of their projects. Prior to the meeting, Ms. Oldham worked diligently to compile literature search strategies and tips for each of the specific topics. She then meet with each group and guided them through an effective search process to get them started and determined if there were any questions or problems with the semester project. The student groups later informed me how the process proved to be extremely helpful and got them “off on the right foot.” Each group was instructed to contact Ms. Oldham or the course instructor Dr. Peter Leininger if they encountered any barriers to an effective literature search during the spring semester.

This year, as a result of the planning, organizing and implementation of the searching procedures via Bonnie Oldham, the overall quality of the student presentations were markedly improved. The improvement from past years’ projects was evident from an

overall improvement in the presentation grades and a notable improvement in the thoroughness and accuracy of the literature searches.

In addition to an improvement in the performances with the written (Power Point format) presentations, the oral presentations by the students in the subsequent course, Orthopaedic Physical Therapy II (PT 714) in the spring term was also markedly improved.

One additional benefit of this Information Literacy Grant, “Enhancing Student Research Skills,” is the high level of *sustainability* of the project. Ms. Oldham constructed a library web link to the PT 713 course. This link includes; 1. Tips and strategies for effective searching, 2. Evidence-based Medicine description and parameters, 3. Evidence-based databases, 4. How to import Pub Med citations in RefWorks, and 5. Interlibrary loan information and instruction.

In summary, the Information Literacy Grant, “Enhancing Student Research Skills,” proved to be a great success through the hard work and skill of Bonnie Oldham, and the close collaboration with her via the instructor Dr. Peter Leininger throughout the process.

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