



Most of my time in the clinic I am happy. I work 10-hour shifts in an orthopaedic and sports clinic. I have been working at the same clinic on a per diem basis for the past 6 years and the clinic has been bought and sold by 3 different companies. For this reason and many others, the clientele has changed since I started working there. Now, I treat patients with a wide range of diagnoses and ages varying from 2-month olds to 98-year olds. I see patients with neurologic disorders including traumatic brain injury, multiple sclerosis, concussion, vestibular migraine, and stroke. I am clinically challenged to the right amount and I am able to run ideas by other therapists who have great ideas for treatment. It's a great profession, isn't it? I help patients get better on a daily basis and being in the clinic is exciting for most of these days. Many times, I leave thinking that I just got paid for something that I love! Wow, what a great profession to work in!

Besides the clientele changing, many other things have changed over the past 6 years and I am certain that these changes are being seen by clinicians across the country. When I first started working at this ortho/sports clinic, I had a high volume of patients which was extremely challenging but forced me to become more efficient. To give you an idea of what I mean by high volume, I admit that I treated 34 patients in one day. I am not sure about your clinic, but I was more familiar with seeing about 15 patients a day. I have talked with many therapists who work under extreme demands for productivity. These therapists had to get used to the idea of having 15-minute treatment sessions and 30 minutes for an evaluation. When I talk to therapists that have never been in this type of clinic, they are outraged. (Watch this video to get the idea! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AS4aiA17YsM>)

Let's point out the benefits of this model of care, and start with the idea of a 30-minute evaluation. I think this type of time limitation helps focus our process of selecting which assessment items are going to inform the treatment. What is going to help this patient reach his or her goal? Staying with the good from this environment, when I worked those high-volume days, I had to get in the groove from the minute I walked in the door until the time I clocked out, so it was an adrenaline rush each and every day in the clinic.

The negative aspects of seeing that many patients are numerous though. I did not get to know the patients well. The co-morbidities that influenced a patient's primary condition were not addressed as much. Some of the exercise was supervised by others who did not always know why I wanted exercises to be done in a specific manner, so they did it as best they knew how. And the documentation! Documentation takes forever and often follows me home because at 7 at night without dinner, I get grumpy. Maybe this is the case for you as well. So, I would go home, eat, and then document. The Bureau of Labor and Statistics (May 2018) reports that 33% of physical therapists work in outpatient settings so I am certain that others feel this way.¹ The challenge of staying on top of notes, evaluations, discharge reports, contacting other health care providers to provide the best care for the patient is still a crazy balancing act for therapists across the country. Managers are asking for therapists to do more. For example, a therapist I know quite well tells me that at the beginning of the day in the inpatient setting, each therapist would receive a yellow sticky note with the time that they were expected to leave for that day and the number of patients that they were assigned to see in that time. Every day, the clinic manager would print out the productivity of the therapists and post it for all to see in yellow highlight. Look at the terrible therapist! The manager was responding to demands from her supervisor. More productivity AND a wider bandwidth of patients. Less money—or no money—for continuing education courses. Mandatory training has also changed. Unfortunately, I now have to watch annual modules on what to do if there is an active shooter in the workplace. A necessary task in our ever-changing world. Something has got to give...

There is hope, though. *Forbes* ranked physical therapists as having 1 of the "Ten Happiest Jobs" in the United States according to articles published in 2011 and 2013.² As I said in my opening paragraph, I love our profession and I really enjoy most days in the clinic. Are there things that I would like to improve? Absolutely! I try to do this by being involved in our profession. At the state level, national level, and in our great Academy. What would you improve? What can you do about it besides yelling out the window "I am

as mad as hell and can't take it anymore." (See earlier video reference.) Do you have strategies to make any of this better? If so, please share your ideas so we can post them online and on social media!

According to a survey conducted in 2007 by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center, more than three-quarters of physical therapists polled reported to be "very satisfied" with their occupations. Physical therapists were second only to clergy in the study and were the only health care professional in the top 5.³ Similar reports were done by CNNMoney.com which gave physical therapists a grade of "A" in Personal Satisfaction back in 2012.⁴ *Forbes* magazine listed physical therapy as one of the "top 10 jobs in high demand and the US News & World Report has continued to include physical therapists as its '100 Best Jobs' in terms of employment opportunity, salary, manageable work-life balance, and job security.² Apparently, we are needed as well! According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of physical therapists is expected to grow by 36% until 2024.¹ This is reported to be much faster than the average for all occupations. Interestingly, Arizona and Pennsylvania are asking APTA for an in-depth look at workforce supply of physical therapists for the upcoming House of Delegates. More to follow on this after June!

I think you'll agree, that while no job is perfect, the opportunities for physical therapists are pretty good. You play a huge role in helping assure that patient care is delivered in efficient and effective ways. Your participation in professional organizations and your voice help shape the way we work in the future.

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