

Brittany Battaglia
2017

Exam Prep Panel

I graduated with a BS of Allied Health Sciences and Psychology in 2012 as well as a MS of Occupational Therapy from Saint Francis University in Pennsylvania in 2013 (I was in a 3-2 program). I always thought I would end up permanently working only in acute care and burns after my second Level II clinical at a burn center. I began my career as a burn therapist and eventually took on the trauma and burn ICU as the dedicated OT on the unit for the first 2 years of my career. I was determined to gain increased competence and skills in splinting and to better understand the anatomy of the upper extremity during this time so I was additionally allowed one day per month to spend in outpatient shadowing the only CHT in our hospital system. I found my favorite part of working with acute injuries was the splinting, wound care and positioning of the upper extremity and trunk to regain function later in the recovery process. When the hospital was bought out by a large group, my husband and I decided to move to Phoenix. I knew then that I was ready to transition into my dream job, a hand clinic.

I was lucky enough to find a company that was willing to take on a relatively new graduate with minimal experience in hands. I immediately knew that becoming a CHT was the only way to maintain the knowledge and competence acceptable to be successful. The company not only had 12 CHTs but also an owner who dedicated his own time twice per month to mentor me in addition to being placed with the owner for 3 months and transitioning to a direct mentor for the next 1 year in the clinic. I studied textbooks, read every journal I could get my hands on, memorized everything I could think to write down, mapped anatomy and learned how to splint beyond a resting hand. The mentorship I received in the first year at my current company was priceless for my hand experience. I also started taking continuing education courses online from ASHT, attended every meeting I could find on UE anatomy and surgical techniques and eventually found the IAOM courses for manual therapy and started on their track for upper extremity certification.

I thought I would have at least 1.5 years further to continue preparation for the previous "5 year rule" to sit for the CHT exam, until last November when we started receiving e-mails from HTCC and ASHT stating the rules had changed. I was at first thrilled, then I was very nervous that I could not possibly be ready for this and then I came to the conclusion that this was a sign because the test was being given the week before we had scheduled a vacation over a year before. I decided to give the test a shot and studied any and all available hours I could find from the day I found out I was eligible until last May.

I passed my exam on the first try in May of 2017 and am still working with the company that helped me achieve my dream, Desert Hand Therapy. I am working in one of the 10 locations and am still working along side of my mentor every day.

I would say the most important thing that made me successful was first believing that I could actually pass this big test and that I did know more than I gave myself credit for.. (with some major encouragement from my mentor!) I would also say the studying process was challenging, but incredibly rewarding because it made me a more competent clinician and I was able to catch things such as a hook of hamate fracture or understand how to treat a lateral band injury correctly. Those 3 letters mean the world to me and I am very proud to be able to wear them and use them to educate and treat patients every day.

Recommended Resources/Materials

- 1- Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity 6th Edition
- 2- "Purple Book" Hand and Upper Extremity Rehabilitation 3rd Edition
- 3- HandTherapy.com: "Hand Exam Prep" Resources list and Purchased Practice Examinations x 3 prior to exam day.
- 4- IAOM-US Hand and Upper Extremity Track courses
- 5- Trail Guide to the Body by Biel
- 6- YouTube (videos of surgical procedures and upper extremity anatomy)
- 7- Consider an exam prep course
- 8- Use ASHT resources!

Advice for the Test

- 1- Make notecards/cheat sheets and put them EVERYWHERE
- 2- Know the brachial plexus, nerve repair order and high vs low nerve injuries
- 3- Know orthoses and application
- 4- Know what is normal FIRST, then start to develop understanding of abnormal/pathology
- 5- Speak with as many CHTs as possible as much as possible- pick their brains!
- 6- Do NOT work 2-3 days before your exam
- 7- Start a journal club, Present on topics you struggle with at work or otherwise
- 8- Pick 2-3 resources and mostly work with only a few

Other Quick Tips

- 1- Find a great place to study
- 2- Use your time wisely: review while driving (in your head), before sleep, at the gym, have family test you, etc.
- 3- Eat well, Sleep well, Exercise
- 4- Don't doubt yourself!

CHT Exam Prep 2017

Hannah Gift, OTR/L, CHT, COMT, CEAS

I graduated from Washington University in St. Louis in 2011 knowing I wanted to be a hand therapist but not knowing how I could make this happen. I researched fellowship programs offered for hand therapy and even though I didn't quite meet the qualifications for applying, I gave it a shot anyway. Currently there is a hand therapy fellowship offered in Philadelphia with the Philadelphia Hand Center; New York City with Hospital for Special Surgery; Ann Arbor Michigan with the University of Michigan Hospital; North Carolina with Orthocolina; Houston with Houston Methodist; and in Rochester NY With the University of Rochester. I interviewed and accepted the Evelyn J. Mackin Hand Therapy Fellowship with the Philadelphia Hand Center in 2012. This fellowship included a full caseload, weekly didactic lectures, reading requirements, monthly surgeon office hours and surgery observation, and a weekly orthosis fabrication lab. I received a very strong background in hand therapy at this fellowship and this groundwork really helped set me up for studying for the CHT exam.

I moved to St. Louis in 2013 and have continued to work in outpatient upper extremity rehab. A mentor told me once to give yourself 2 years to study for the CHT exam, but I was already in the study mode from my fellowship so I started studying about 5 hours per week at the time. I also took every opportunity for a continuing education opportunity and average about 120 hours of continuing education per year. I also reached out to the OT programs in St. Louis and I am involved in teaching at all three OT programs with orthosis fabrication and upper extremity rehab. I really recommend reaching out to either OT programs or other OTs/hand therapists to offer some kind of teaching, because the best way to understand the material is to teach it to someone else.

The final thing I wanted to touch on is how becoming involved in ASHT helped me prepare for the CHT exam. I started volunteering for the ASHT education division in 2015. I am the chair for the hands on orthotics courses, which introduced me to new orthoses and gives me the opportunity teach orthosis fabrication. I took the Hand Therapy Review Course in 2014, and in 2015 and 2016 I was able to attend the course and assist the cadaver portion of the course which was very valuable. I am also on the webinar committee so I have the opportunity to moderate and attend the webinars each month. Volunteering with ASHT is a commitment but if you are interested, it can lead to very valuable experiences that can prepare you for the exam. Every year emails come out asking for volunteers, and there are opportunities for every area of ASHT, including education division, practice division, and research division.

Resources used:

- ASHT CHT prep book
- Study group through employer
- Purple book
- Rehab of the hand
- ASHT Hand Therapy Review Course
- Certification in Orthopedic Manual Therapy program

CHT exam prep 2017
Bonnie Trainor Lucio, LOTR, CHT

I graduated from Louisiana State Medical Center with a BS in Occupational Therapy in 1986. While in school, I was fascinated with upper extremity anatomy and knew I wanted to work with individuals who injured or had deficits with their upper extremities. For my last fieldwork, I chose to complete a hand and burn specialty, which further peaked my interest in hands. I originally began my career working at an acute care hospital, whose director of the department was an orthopedic surgeon. He referred his patients to me and expected me to do what it took to help in their rehabilitation. I was the only OT in the department, so I had to become resourceful to find information and learn about diagnoses which were not familiar. I was on a mission to learn as much as I could about hand therapy and began reading books and journals to expand my knowledge. I attended surgeries with the orthopedic surgeons and attended weekly rounds to absorb and learn as much as I could and often spent time in the library looking up hand therapy articles. This was before the internet and before pub med became readily available! I also attended local continuing education courses and met other more seasoned therapists, whom I called to discuss cases with or talk about protocols or just to pick their brain.

I loved my time at this hospital, learned a lot and grew as a therapist, but knew I wanted more exposure to hand patients. I heard about a local hand therapy fellowship program in New Orleans and applied for it. Instead of being accepted into the fellowship program, the hand therapy director and her mentor, Dr. Harold Stokes hired me to begin on the job mentoring while treating patients. They were both incredibly supportive and often I would go on rounds with Dr. Stokes while he saw patients. He would grill me and his hand surgery residents and fellows about different diagnoses and this type of interaction forced me to further study and learn about treating the hand. I became a charter active member of ASHT at the time when a therapist had to submit three hand therapy case studies for review to the society in order to become a member. Those case studies helped me learn about research. Afterward, I became involved with a research study related to TFCC tears and had the findings published in The Journal of Hand Therapy. I began taking OT students interested in hand therapy and mentored those students. By teaching someone else information about hand therapy, one learns what they know and don't know. The more I taught certain topics the more I retained and the more comfortable I became with hand rehabilitation. I also began giving lectures at LSU for both the OT and PT programs.

My next challenge was to take the CHT exam. I had to wait until the second year the CHT exam was administered to take the test because I graduated May 25, 1986 and the test was given May 4, 1991. I did not have the full five years necessary to sit for the exam. So, I waited... and prepared. I attended an ASHT review course which helped me plan how to strategically study all areas that would be on the exam. There was one other therapist in my local area that was going to take the exam and she and I began copying articles from hand journals and books listed in the review course. Three huge binders full of articles plus our main references, Rehab of the Hand and Green's Operative Hand Surgery were what we used to study for the exam. We met and studied together once every two weeks and in between we studied individually so that when we got back together we would share and discuss what we had learned. We started about a year before the exam, but took breaks during holidays and on some weekends. I took a few days off of work before the exam to study and felt as prepared as I possibly could be for the exam. I got a good night's rest and ate a healthy breakfast the morning of the exam. I also got to the exam site early. During the exam, if I didn't know the answer, I would move on to the next question and place a dot next to the one in question. I later

went back and completed the ones that I wasn't sure about. Waiting for the results was torture, but I was thrilled to learn that I passed. I couldn't be happier with the career path I chose and I take great pride in being able to say that I am a hand therapist. The journey has been incredible.

Preparation pearls:

- Utilize the practice analysis that identifies what is on the exam and the other great resources provided by HTCC and ASHT.
- Know your weaknesses and where to focus. If you don't know what they are, take the self-assessment tool on HTCC's website to identify strengths and weaknesses and study accordingly.
- Have a plan with dates and topics to be studied and adhere to your plan.
- When I took the exam, the references were limited. Use the references provided by HTCC's 2016 Exam Prep Survey.
- Join a study group and teach each other. In my opinion, there is no better way to feel confident in your knowledge, than to have to teach it to someone else or say it out loud to yourself.
- Know the brachial plexus, nerve innervations and resulting effect from injury and write it down on the exam if you can't remember.
- Study and prepare notes/notecards and review frequently.
- Think about each topic that you're studying from a clinical standpoint, not just by memorizing the information.
- Study a few hours at a time. Don't try to cram for hours on end. Take time out to enjoy yourself between study sessions.
- Take practice tests to become familiar with wording of test questions.
- If possible, attend an exam review course.
- If you're not sure about a question, rule out the distractors and focus on the possible choices.