

2021 ASHT Annual Meeting

Exam Prep Panel

Ashley Enke
OTR/L, CHT
Minneapolis,
MN

Adeola Okediji
PT, CHT
Mineola,
NY

Marie Wiser
OTR/L, CHT
Nashville,
TN

Background

- Earned a doctoral degree in occupational therapy from Creighton University in 2017.
- Worked for nine months at a rural clinic in inpatient and outpatient settings. Outpatient caseload was primarily orthopedic with a hand surgeon as the main referral source.
- Completed an AOTA-approved hand therapy fellowship through Fairview and the University of Minnesota from 2018 to 2019.
- When studying for the CHT exam, worked 32 hours per week at an outpatient hand therapy clinic with referrals from hand surgery, sports medicine, and family practice clinics.
- Becoming a certified hand therapist had been a career goal since graduate school. Committed to taking the exam as soon as I met the requirements.

Preparing for the Exam

- Studied from November 2020 to May 2021.
- Studied 1-2 hours per day on workdays and 4-5 hours per day on weekends.
- Started by taking the ASHT Virtual Hand Therapy Review Course pre-test.
- Worked through “the purple book” at a pace of five chapters per month.
- Synced ASHT Virtual Hand Therapy Review Course lectures with “purple book” content.
- Read about unfamiliar topics in *Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity*.
- Took notes and created flashcards on review course lectures and “purple book” content.
- Drew the brachial plexus, dermatomes/myotomes, and tendon zones a few times per week.
- Learned mnemonics for nerve innervations and practiced weekly.
- Completed ASHT Virtual Hand Therapy Review Course post-test. Created practice test from “purple book” questions answered incorrectly during review. Both completed about a month before the exam.
- Checked in periodically with two colleagues preparing for the exam.

Exam Day

- Be familiar with the exam format and time allotment.
- Visit your test site before exam day.
- Decide what you want to write on your scrap paper before exam day and practice it.
- Don't watch the clock. Check in periodically to assess your pacing.
- Take mental breaks throughout the exam.
- Remember your clinical reasoning and experience.

Resources and Materials Used

- ASHT Virtual Hand Therapy Review Course
- *Hand and Upper Extremity Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide and Review*, 4th edition (“the purple book”)
- *Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity*, 7th edition
- *Everyday Upper Extremity Anatomy: A Clinical Guide, Reference, and Interactive Workbook*
- *Atlas of Human Anatomy* (Netter)
- Orthobullets website
- Wheelless' Textbook of Orthopaedics website

Study Tips

- Understand your learning style and what study strategies work best for you.
- Follow hand therapy groups on social media.
- Make time for an activity you enjoy!

Introduction:

- Professional/Work Demographics
- Reason for taking the CHT exam
- # of study hours per week day and per weekend
- # of exam retakes

Study Materials:

- ASHT Test Prep for the CHT Exam
- Purple Book
- YouTube videos on Anatomy and evaluations
- Liveconferences.com

Personal Effective way in preparing for the CHT Exam:

- Since I had limited knowledge of becoming a CHT, I attended a couple of hand therapy workshops at NYU to gain better understanding of this specialty
- I liaised with another veteran PT CHT who was very encouraging along the way. Thank you, Olga Hincapie!
- I decided to enjoy what I was studying and study as if the Hand is telling me its story as to why it functions the way it does
- I studied to facilitate understanding and utilized critical thinking
- I started with the Test prep for the CHT exam
 - My goal was to finish 1-2 chapters per week
 - I practiced the questions and studied the answers of the corresponding chapter in the Purple book
- I purchased all the topics I had difficulty comprehending as well as all the practice exams on Liveconferences.com website
- Since most of my day is spent on the road, I decided to calculate how much time it would take me to study and understand the materials. I came up with a realistic schedule and decided to study for 1-2 hours/day during the week and 4-6 hours/day on the weekend. I also completed some practice exams on the weekends
- I like to use all my senses to study, so I recorded some topics I had difficulty with and listened to my recording on the road as well as YouTube videos on the anatomy of the upper quadrant
- I wrote down some bullet points that I had difficulty remembering and studied them again 2 days before the exam

Exam Prep Tips:

- If you do not have or cannot seem to find a study group that works for you, keep on studying on your own. You've got this!
- Study the upper quadrant to understand why it works the way it does and if it does not work the way it is supposed to, figure out what the issue is and how it can be resolved
- Practice what you study and apply it to the different areas as you treat your patients

- Use all your senses to study. For example, use your hearing by listening to recorded materials. Palpate your body when studying your anatomy etc.
- Use mnemonics to remember aspects of your study that seem to fly away like a bird all the time (for example: the path of the ulnar, median and radial nerve, brachial plexus, extensor compartments of the wrist, carpals of the hand, Norm of Semmes-Weinstein Style monofilament, sensory receptors-function, order of sensory return etc.)
- If you do not pass the exam the first time around, remember that you know more than you did before you took the exam, so be fearless
- Do not ever give up. The materials could seem overwhelming but do not ever give up. If you have a desire to take this exam and become a CHT, then you were created for this and there is a patient who is waiting for you to help them
- The ASHT Test Prep for the CHT is a great resource to read and understand how the hand works. The Purple Book is good for practice questions. However, the question do not require as much critical thinking as the real exam. It is important to study and understand the reasoning behind the answers to the questions in the Purple Book
- The questions on the Liveconferences.com practice exams are on a similar to the questions on the CHT exam. Work through many practice exams as possible to work on your time management
- Do not try to overload your brain in one day. Nothing else will stick anyway if you do. Take some time to rest and reactivate your brain in between studying
- Make sure to have a good night's rest before the exam day

Day of Exam Tips:

- You have only 4 hours for this wonderful exam, so use it wisely.
- At the beginning, a sheet of paper and a pencil will be given to you. Use these resources to write down all aspects of your study that seem to fly away like a bird from your brain. Take your time to write them all down on the sheet of paper and give your brain some breathing space
- If you have to use the restroom, do so before you press start for the exam. Your time only starts ticking when you hit the start button for the exam
- If you are getting stuck on a question, chose an answer you think it could be and note the question so you can come back to it if you have extra time.

Note:

Don't Stress. Nothing is impossible. Don't give up!

Background:

I am a native Tennessean and have been a licensed OT since 1993. I received my first bachelor's degree in biology. At that time, Tennessee did not have an occupational therapy program, and it wasn't until my mother had a stroke and received occupational therapy that I found out about the field of OT and had a desire to pursue it. While in my program, we had an adjunct professor who was a CHT and I was immediately impressed both with her, and her area of specialty. I had not heard of a hand therapist or hand therapy prior to meeting her. I completed a special interest internship in hand therapy, and it was during that experience I discovered my passion for treating upper extremity patients and solidified my decision to specialize in hand therapy. After 28 years, I am still passionate about my profession and still love helping people regain the functional use of their upper extremity and return to activities they enjoy, hobbies, work, and being as independent as possible. I think that's why our patients are so appreciative of what we do and why we love it so. I live in Nashville; TN and my entire career has been spent in middle Tennessee. I have always worked in outpatient settings, and currently work full time for Select Physical Therapy in two different outpatient clinics. Being in "Music City", I have had the privilege of treating both professional and amateur musicians, as well as people from a wide variety of backgrounds including surgeons, chefs, teachers, skilled and unskilled laborers and retired persons from all walks of life. I see a high caseload of work comp patients and occasionally treat geriatric and pediatric patients. The path to earning my CHT was a long one with a couple of unexpected detours. I took the exam in November 2019 and was very close to passing. I was planning to take it again in May of 2020, but we all know what happened there. I was then planning to retake in November of 2020 but had a sudden onset of unilateral hearing loss in mid-September which resulted in severe tinnitus. Once again, an unexpected event derailed my plan. But I took the exam in May of this year and passed! Persistence paid off! So, my motto is: "It's never too late, you're never too old!"

To quote one of my personal heroes: "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved." -- Helen Keller

Materials Used:

Hand and Upper Extremity Rehabilitation: Practical Guide Fourth Edition- I read this book cover to cover, making detailed notes for myself for later review as I read.

Hand & Upper Extremity Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide and Review (Vol 2)- I would take the quizzes on the related chapters after reading the above book and reviewing Rehab of the Hand for any additional in depth information I felt like I needed

Rehabilitation of the Hand, Volume 1 and 2- I used this more as a reference or for in depth review of a specific topic

Test Prep for the CHT Exam, ASHT 3rd Edition- The format of this book (outline) was not as helpful to me as the narrative of the Hand & UE Rehab: Practical Guide, however the tests were great review. The quizzes at the end of each chapter were very helpful, and the 200 question quiz at the end was great.

Netter's Clinical Anatomy

Flash cards- there are online ones (HandTherapyNow flash cards), but I made my own because that has always worked best for me.

You Tube videos- these were great anatomy review resources for me. I would watch them, then listen to them while driving

Online practice exams. I used Exploring Hand Therapy (HandTherapy.com) which I really liked. Another resource is Hand Therapy Now.com These tests were very valuable to me because taking this exam on the computer was very different from the paper tests in the books which are easier and more comfortable for me. I took these about a month before the CHT exam. By the way, I took two of these online exams, and came close but did not pass either one. I learned the questions I missed, and it actually gave me more confidence.

Study Methods and Tips:

-Select Hand Therapy Study Group- This was invaluable as it gave me an organized way to study, and accountability. It is a yearlong study program and each month is a different topic with assigned reading. Note: If your employer does not have an active study group, you can use HTCC as a resource for this

-I would recommend 8-12 months to prepare for the test. Depending on home responsibilities, childcare needs/ages/activities, and availability of spouse/partner, your time may be more or less, but I would plan to study 8-10 hours/week on average. That's a big commitment.

- Have an organized plan. One to two topics per month. This will help tremendously with decreasing the feeling of being overwhelmed.

-I used my commute time to review. I listened to YouTube videos during my drive time to work.

-I drew the brachial plexus daily (note: there are YouTube videos on how to draw the BP in < 2 minutes). I would practice my "cheat" sheet which for me was the brachial plexus, flexor tendon pyramid, sensory return sequence, etc. Practice your entire sheet at least once/week and work on decreasing the time it takes to write it as this time is included in your test time. I got mine down to 12 minutes.

-Know your anatomy!!! (you're probably sick of hearing this!), but it's absolutely essential

-Don't study the day or night before the test. Focus on positive vibes and reminding yourself of how hard you've worked and prepared. That's more important than last minute review. If possible, drive to the testing center before the day of the test, and know where the restrooms are!

-Know your areas of weakness (probably diagnoses/populations you don't see much in your clinic)

-Teaching is the highest form of learning. If you can teach it, you've got it! If you don't have an OT student while preparing for the test, you can do what I did and teach it to your dog!

-Have a plan for the test. 200 questions, 4 hours (240 minutes – approx. 30 min for cheat sheet, restroom break if needed and test review. That leaves 210 min for 200 questions. My test started at 8:30, so I was pacing myself and wanted to be ½ way through the test at approximately 10:40am