

**Background:**

I first became interested in Occupational Therapy in 2006 after observing a Hand Therapist, Lt Col Dalomba, at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, when I was finishing my Bachelor's Degree. Although at the time I did not know the exact area of OT I wished to practice, hand therapy certainly had a lure. I graduated with my Masters in Occupational Therapy in 2010 from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. After graduate school, I moved to Durham, North Carolina to work at Duke University Medical Center in their Cardiothoracic ICU and Acute Care ward. Two years later in 2012, I commissioned into the United States Air Force and was stationed at Travis Air Force Base, California. There, at David Grant Medical Center, I took on an orthopedic therapist role and worked closely with two board-certified hand surgeons. This experience solidified my desire to specialize in hand therapy. In 2013, I applied and was accepted to an Air Force funded Fellowship training at the Hand Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I completed 6 months of therapist training through the Evelyn Mackin Hand Rehabilitation Fellowship, and then transitioned to a Physician Extender Fellowship at the Hand Center. For the next year, I had the opportunity to work with a team of renowned hand surgeons, both in the clinic and OR. It was at the end of this fellowship that I tested for the CHT and I attribute my passing the exam greatly to the knowledge and experience I gained at the Hand Center in Philadelphia. After finishing the Fellowship in the summer of 2016, I was stationed at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Here I work as the sole OT in an outpatient orthopedic clinic that covers 5 geographically separated military installations. In addition to this, I teach the upper extremity module as adjunct faculty to the Tactical Sports and Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapy Fellowship for the Air Force.

**Approach to Study:**

In March of 2016, I set the goal of testing for the CHT that coming May. This gave me approximately 2 months to prepare for the exam and although I had been greatly immersed in hand therapy through the Fellowship, I knew I had to focus my studying and set up a solid plan of action to succeed. Using *Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity* (6<sup>th</sup> ed, Skirven) and *Hand and Upper Extremity Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide & Review* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed, Falkenstein & Weiss) aka "The Purple Book," I outlined week by week objectives for study, and religiously held myself to it. I learn through writing and teaching, so I made long-hand outlines of each chapter and then transcribed those to note cards for quick reference and review. I had my co-workers and friends quiz me and took every opportunity in the OR that I could to fully review anatomy and discuss clinical course of care for whatever procedure the patient was receiving. I lived and breathed hand therapy for those 8 weeks, waking up early to review, flipping through notecards in traffic and between patient visits, discussing cases with the surgeons and therapists at the Hand Center, and re-assessing my understanding via the Quiz-Corner on the Exploring Hand Therapy website. As the test day approached, I finalized my "cheat sheet" for the exam and took multiple mock-tests through the Exploring Hand Therapy website. I set a timer, wrote out my cheat sheet, and took the exam as if it were the actual test day. This not only prepared me for the format of test questions, but allowed me to familiarize myself with the time constraints and general stress of the exam. In addition to this, it highlighted areas of information that I needed to focus my studying in the

days before the test. If I missed a question, I went back to the literature and learned everything about the topic covered. These tests are definitely worth the investment and although in all honesty, I never felt 100% prepared for the exam, passing the online tests helped to build my confidence that I was ready.

#### Materials/Resources Used:

Netter – Anatomy

Personal Outline/Goals of Study to be accomplished

Hand & Upper Extremity Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide & Review

Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity, 6<sup>th</sup> ed

Exploring Hand Therapy Quizlets and Practice Exams

OR observation

Patients – Educating on diagnosis, discussion with medical team (surgeon, therapist, etc)

Mentors – Hand Center Therapists/Fellowship Faculty, Hand Center Surgeons and Surgical Fellows

Note Cards

Remembering WHY you are taking the exam – find your personal motivation

Philadelphia Hand Conference 2015, 2016

Find a distraction-free place to study

#### Test Day:

Know location of testing center – go day prior to exam to ensure you can find it

Get plenty of sleep and eat a good breakfast

Review key points to structure thinking

Dress comfortably and in layers

Take a deep breath

Write out your cheat sheet

Read each question in its entirety and formulate your own response before reading options

Record questions that you would like to revisit

\*When its done, it's done- do something to relax! Try not to obsess over questions or research what you may or may not have missed.

## Background

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Let me start by getting one thing out in the open, I am a perpetual student. I love to learn as many new things as I can. I think this constant, steady approach to knowledge helped me prepare for the exam. I graduated from New York Institute of Technology in 2005 with my Doctorate in Physical Therapy. For the next nine years I worked in a variety of settings and considered many different specialties (Neuro, Ortho, Sports, Mckenzie etc.) along the way but none of them seemed to fit. In 2014 I decided to revisit the list of specialties and liked the distinctiveness of hands. I have always been interested in wound care and prosthetics/orthotics. Both of these areas fit nicely in the specialty of hand rehabilitation.

During my research into interesting specialties, I learned about Drexel University's certificate course in the hand and upper extremity rehabilitation. I was accepted to the program and after nine years of practice I went back to school while continuing to work full time (yikes)! I learned an incredible amount of information during my time at Drexel, I felt like I was always scrambling because I didn't know all the lingo. I had no experience working with hand patients and no opportunity to apply my new knowledge as I was learning it. I was perpetually playing catch up. The class was mostly OT's and the majority had experience in hands. During the course, we had many opportunities to practice-but I just couldn't develop enough confidence treating hand patients. The knowledge component was there but I was lacking application. I called every hand therapy clinic I could find, offering to to volunteer my time in exchange for gaining some experience, exposure and practice. They all said no. I did not give up! I heard about two hand therapy fellowships in the northeast but they both would require a HUGE reduction in my income. I would have to leave my job, secure alternative health insurance coverage AND I knew that the programs only took one person per academic year. Despite those challenges, I applied. It couldn't hurt to at least try. I was ecstatic when I found out I was accepted to a hand therapy fellowship program! But could I swing it??? After a lot of soul searching, I decided I would kick myself if I didn't do it. It was hard, financially and academically. There were many hours of studying and working. However, I wouldn't change my decision for anything! It was during my intense fellowship that everything clicked and made sense. I was able to apply everything I had learned from the Drexel program, from my nine years in orthopedic physical therapy and from an amazing mentor, now friend. It went so well that I was able to take (and pass) the CHT before I completed my fellowship.

I am now working at UF Health Shands in Gainesville, FL. I have the opportunity to work full time in hand therapy treating a variety of conditions. I also have the privilege of teaching classes at the University of Florida Physical Therapy school. I love having the chance to share my passion for hand therapy with young PT students, and hopefully spark their interest in the world of hand therapy.

Gaining access to the specialty of hand therapy is a challenge for physical therapists. It takes perseverance and maybe a little luck. Preparing for and passing the CHT exam takes the same: a steady and constant commitment to learning the information and obtaining the experience needed to confidently treat this patient population.

## Materials Used

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- ❖ “The Purple Book” – Weiss, Susan. *Hand and Upper Extremity Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide and Review*. St Louis, MO. 2004
- ❖ Cooper, Cynthia. *Fundamentals of Hand Therapy*. St Louis, MO. 2014
- ❖ ASHT. *Test Prep for the CHT Exam*.
- ❖ Skirven et al. *Rehab of the Hand and Upper Extremity*. Philadelphia, PA. 2011
- ❖ Wolfe, Scott. *Greens Operative Hand Surgery*. Philadelphia, PA. 2011

- ❖ Hand Therapy Resource Center
  - Flashcard App
- ❖ Quizlet
- ❖ Wheelless' Textbook of Orthopedics
- ❖ Orthobullets
- ❖ Youtube.com – Dr. Preddy
  - Anatomy 1 & 2, brachial plexus

### *Exam Preparation*

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- ❖ Purple Book
  - Reviewed all chapters and questions. If I got a question wrong I wrote the facts down in a notebook to review later – affectionately called my “nerd book” by friends
  - Each chapter was different alternating colors to help my visual memory
- ❖ Cooper Fundamentals
  - Used during my fellowship
  - Preferred textbook I felt like it was an easy read and got to the point
- ❖ Rehab of the Hand
  - Used during Drexel course and fellowship
  - Great video library online
- ❖ ASHT
  - Not my favorite read
  - Outline format
- ❖ Greens, Wheelless, Orthobullets
  - Reference for surgical interventions
  - Imaging examples
- ❖ Dr. Preddy
  - LOVE him!
  - Amazing videos that you will not forget the anatomy, innervations and brachial plexus
- ❖ Quizlet, Flashcard
  - Review on the bus/train during commute

### *Recommendations*

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- ❖ Study in the way that makes you most comfortable and you will retain material. If study groups aren't your thing...study alone
- ❖ Take the exam the same way you study, in your comfort zone. I need to plow through material and get it done, taking breaks messes up my flow
- ❖ Take advantage of as many resources as you can – books, colleagues, review courses etc.
- ❖ When I sat down to take my exam:
  - I drew out the entire brachial plexus with labels
  - Listed radial, median and ulnar nerve order of innervation

Steph Clement  
Outline - Philadelphia Hand Symposium 2017

**Background:** I have been a therapist for over ten years, working in a variety of settings from inpatient rehab with a focus on neuro to an inpatient, locked psychiatric hospital, to acute care, skilled nursing, and then focusing on hand therapy. I have found that all of my experience helps me every day with treatment and dealing with the variety of issues we tend to see in hand therapy. However, I was concerned regarding taking the CHT exam as most people I knew who were taking the test in the upcoming years, had only ever worked in hand therapy. Though I had been focused on hand therapy for the past two years, I was still concerned that I did not have enough clinical experience. With that being said, my approach to studying was to make sure that I not only memorized the material, but that I also understood the information and I wanted to start early (I started ‘seriously’ studying in April for the Nov exam).

## Tips

### Find a variety of ways to test yourself and your knowledge

- I. Why this is important
  - A. Studying is more than just memorization, meaning that the information you learn must be UNDERSTOOD to ensure ability to answer challenging questions
  - B. Challenging yourself to recall the information in a variety of forms will assist in allowing you to answer a questions on the same topic that may be worded differently
  - C. This will give you confidence going into the exam day.
- II. How to test your understanding:
  - A. One way that I found helpful was to present myself with challenging, yet open ended questions on topics that I was least familiar with
    1. I did this by writing out question sheets to answer all aspects of a topic
      - a) For example, I wanted to be sure I understood the variations on nerve compressions such as Pronator Syndrome, Wartenberg’s Syndrome, Radial Tunnel, CTS, etc.
      - b) So, while studying the topics, I wrote out question regarding the diagnoses that I would answer at a later date to test my understanding
      - c) This would also allow you to write the information out in your own words
  - B. Using teaching opportunities with Pts is another way to prove to yourself you know what your stuff.
    1. Pt education is both good for the Pt but also allows you an opportunity to pull your studied information forward in a clinical matter.
  - C. Flashcards are another good way to test your knowledge, but be sure to put the information in your own words
    1. I found these to be most helpful with studying anatomy
  - D. Taking practice tests will always be helpful as they give you an opportunity to work through questions

### Breakup the information before beginning the studying process

- I. I found it very helpful to divide the information into sections that made sense to me and then create a timeline or plan for how to get through all the information
  1. I chose to use anatomical locations to do this, starting proximally and moving distally
  2. I looked at anatomy first, then conservative management of common diagnoses followed by surgical management, precautions, and surgical techniques.
  3. I left time for miscellaneous topics at the end, such as lymphedema, congenital disorders, amputations, etc

#### Study with a partner or group

- I. Find a group or partner to study with
  - A. Try to find others who approach studying in a similar fashion to you
- II. Having others to study with will also allow you an opportunity to test your knowledge by quizzing each other
  - A. Also, you can talk out confusing topics, relate information to clinical examples, and use each other's' strengths

#### Test Day Tips

- I. Do a 'dry run' to the test location prior to test day to clarify how long it will take you and to make sure you know where you are going, where you will park, etc
- II. Arrive early the day of the test to avoid unnecessary stress
  - A. Try to also get a good night's sleep if possible
- III. When taking the test, cover the answers and read the question. Come up with the answer on your own before looking at the multiple choice options.
  - A. Though the questions are not worded to purposely be confusing or to trick you, some of the answers can be quite similar, forcing you to know the correct response. To not confuse yourself, don't look at the answers

#### Primary Resources:

Rehab of the hand

Purple book - I used this as another method of testing my knowledge

ASHT Review book