

# A new service: Planned Learning and Assistance Network (P.L.A.N.)

Judy White



Sixty percent of the foreign-educated physical therapists (FEPT) evaluated by the Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy (FCCPT) are not found to be substantially equivalent to the first professional degree in physical therapy in the United States. Beginning in November 2007, the Planned Learning and Assistance Network (PLAN) was initiated to assist the FEPT by providing potential academic resources to fulfill the identified deficiencies in general and professional education. In August and October 2007, online surveys were sent to physical therapy program directors to determine what existing courses, online and on campus, might be made available for the FEPT.

Since its inception, more than 150 FEPT have enrolled in PLAN to provide guidance for appropriate course selections, as well as to verify that FCCPT accepted accreditation of the academic institutions. The PLAN applicant is required to complete a PLAN Worksheet that identifies the proposed courses to meet their deficiencies. The Worksheet is then reviewed as a part of the applicant's preparation for their future re-evaluation once the coursework has been completed.

Several academic programs have been actively involved with providing coursework opportunities for these individuals seeking licensure in the U.S. The involvement of academic programs has expanded, including faculty who have developed independent study courses for specific content deficiencies. Through interactions with academic administrators at the APTA Academic Administrators Special Interest Group annual leadership conferences, additional programs have expressed interest in becoming involved.

Advantages to the physical therapy program include: 1) support a mission of educating international students; 2) enhancement of cultural diversity; 3) tuition funds; 4) financial support to continue t-DPT courses as the degree program is phased out; and 5) the support of the PLAN counselor who acts as a liaison between the academic institution and the FEPT.

The most common professional education deficiencies are pharmacology; geriatrics; cardiopulmonary evaluation; integumentary examination, evaluation, and interventions; administration; research and clinical decision making; community health and wellness; and, legal and ethical aspects of physical therapy.

In addition, common content area (not a specific course) deficiencies include: aerobic capacity; arousal, mentation, and

cognition; neuromotor development and sensory integration; educational techniques; and functional training in self-care and home management. These content areas are best provided in an independent study model. Supervised clinical practice may also be needed for course credits. Transitional DPT distance education programs provide the most convenient situation for both the academic program and the FEPT. The best scenarios are online courses, many of which are in t-DPT programs.

Since April 1, 2008, the Federation's current Coursework Tool (CWT 4) requirement has been 60 semester credits in general education and 90 semester credits in professional education. As of July 1, 2009, CWT 5 will go into effect. Foreign educated physical therapists will then need to demonstrate educational content in metabolic systems, cultural competency, emergency procedures and supervision and delegation. ■

Please contact Judy White at [jwhite@fccpt.org](mailto:jwhite@fccpt.org) for more information about PLAN.



Judy White was on the faculty at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for 20 years where she was Professor and Coordinator of the Professional Education programs. She has served on multiple NPTE committees for the past 12 years and is currently an Item Writer Coordinator. Judy served on the FSBPT Board of Directors and was awarded the President's Award in 2002. She is currently coordinating the FCCPT's Planned Learning and Assistance Network program.

**CALENDAR** continued from page 2

**AUGUST**

- 6-9 IBRC PT & PTA, Alexandria, VA
- 21 Motions/2009 Delegate Handbook to membership

**SEPTEMBER**

- 10-12 CLEAR Annual Conference, Denver, CO
- 25-27 Item Writing Workshop (remotely)
- 30 CBA Forum, San Diego, CA

**OCTOBER**

- 1-4 FARB Attorney Certification, Chicago, IL
- 1-4 Annual Meeting and Delegate Assembly, San Diego, CA (Wednesday through Sunday)
- 1-3 NPTE Workshop for Faculty, San Diego, CA
- 6-7 INPTRA Meeting, Sydney, Australia
- 16 TAP, Alexandria, VA
- 22-25 IBRC PT, Alexandria, VA
- 27-29 CAC Annual Meeting, Asheville, NC
- 29-31 APTA Student Conclave, Miami, FL

**NOVEMBER**

- 12-15 IBRC PTA, Alexandria, VA

**DECEMBER**

- 4-5 Finance Committee, Alexandria, VA
- 5-6 BOD Meeting, Alexandria, VA