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president's **perspective**

Continuing the discussion on continuing competence

By E. Dargan Ervin, Jr., PT



Continuing competence has been and will continue to be a popular discussion topic of regulatory boards, professional associations and the public. We see more and more professions and jurisdictions take up and in some cases struggle with this complex issue. I would like to take a look back at 2009 and highlight the progress that has occurred within the FSBPT and our member jurisdictions in the area of continuing competence.

Since our Delegate Assembly passed the motion on continuing competence in 2007, the Federation has made ongoing investment in structure, systems and tools. After extensive review and comment from stakeholders, the Board approved the Federation's Continuing Competence Model in May 2009.

As a follow up to the General Practice Review Tool (PRT), an Orthopedic Review Tool has been developed with the standard setting workshop was held in the Fall of 2009. After some final item review, this tool will be released and available this year. Licensees and jurisdictions are finding ways to utilize the General Practice PRT and we see a lot of interest in both Tools at our booth displays both at the APTA Annual Meeting and Combined Sections Meetings.

And our online tracking system, aPTitude, is currently accessible, in a beta version, to our members. This system offers huge potential to jurisdictional boards and licensees for demonstration and communication of ongoing competence. This will also be an asset for professional licensees in finding educational and competence activities to meet their needs.

And what's been happening in our member jurisdictions related to continuing competence in the past year?

I am pleased to see and report that we have many jurisdictions that are embracing and enacting continuing competence initiatives.

California, North Carolina and Texas have implemented regulations for continuing competence. Pennsylvania is working on rules to help broaden the definition of Continuing Education to allow use of Continuing Competence activities. Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Nebraska, New Hampshire and Virginia have regulatory language that refers to continuing competence

Nine jurisdictions presently approve the PRT for credit hours that exceed the "seat time." Plus, at least four other jurisdictions are presently working on language to approve the Practice Review Tool for credit hours for licensure renewal. If your jurisdiction is working on something that I didn't mention, or if you would like any more information or assistance, please let me or our staff members know.

The FSBPT Board and APTA Board are also working cooperatively on the topic. In 2009 and 2010, there have been meetings of small groups from both boards exploring continued competence in physical therapy and looking for opportunities to ensure ongoing practitioner competence in a way that benefits the public and is reasonable for licensing jurisdictions and practitioners alike. More information on the work product that our Boards have been engaged in should be available later this year.

As always, the upcoming year offers opportunities and challenges. It does appear that there is positive momentum in the FSBPT and our member jurisdictions in the area of continuing competence and this is so exciting. Thanks so much for all that you do in public protection and please feel free to contact me if you have questions or if the Federation can be of assistance to you our your jurisdiction in this or any other area.

Dargan Ervin, Jr., PT is a 1981 graduate of the Physical Therapy Program at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). He has practiced in a variety of settings with responsibilities ranging from patient care, Medicare and HIPAA compliance and financial management. Dargan has been a member of the South Carolina Board of PT Examiners since 1992, and served as chair from 1995 to 2000. He headed the Federation's Prescreening Task Force and was a member of the Finance Committee. Dargan has also been active in the APTA and the SC Physical Therapy Association since enrolling in physical therapy school. He served as Treasurer for the SC Chapter of the APTA from 1984 to 1987 and as FSBPT Treasurer from 2000 to 2004. He is the 1999 recipient of the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Medical University of South Carolina College of Allied Health Sciences. In 2001 Dargan received Emily Cate Award from the South Carolina Physical Therapy Association for his noteworthy contributions to physical therapy on a local and national level. In September 2008, Dargan was inducted into the first class of the MUSC College of Allied Health Sciences' Hall of Fame.