

AVAILABILITY OF ETHICS REMEDIATION AND EFFECTIVE DELIVERY MECHANISMS FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY LICENSING BOARDS

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Availability of Ethics Remediation and Effective Delivery Mechanisms for Physical Therapy Licensing Boards

4th Edition

The Evolving Landscape of Bioethics in Physical Therapy Practice

Bioethics, like healthcare itself, is a dynamic, complex, and continuously evolving field. Its principles are critical in analyzing and applying ethics within the practice of physical therapy. Ensuring that physical therapists (PTs) and physical therapist assistants (PTAs) uphold ethical standards extends well beyond Hippocrates' foundational ideal of "do no harm." Ethical practice in healthcare encompasses key principles such as beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, and justice.

Resources such as the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy's (FSBPT) *Model Practice Act*, the white paper *Understanding "Reasonable and Prudent" and "Standard of Care" in Physical Therapy Practice*, and the American Physical Therapy Association's (APTA) *Code of Ethics* underscore the critical importance of ethical behavior in physical therapy. However, ethics is neither easily taught nor static. Instead, ethics in healthcare evolve with advancements in health technology, changing financial incentives, communication challenges, health disparities, and the necessity for continued professional competence.

Many jurisdictions incorporate education on ethics into continuing education requirements or as part of disciplinary remediation for PTs and PTAs. FSBPT members have expressed concerns about the limited number of resources for addressing ethical or behavioral issues compared to those available for remediating clinical competence. Effective ethics remediation extends beyond traditional classroom instruction to include one-on-one counseling, interactive group activities, or other applied learning methods. This can be time-consuming, difficult to monitor, and costly.

A vital initial step in any remediation effort is identifying the root cause of the ethical violation through assessment. Understanding the underlying issue provides licensing boards with valuable insight to apply the most appropriate disciplinary action and remediation approach. The Citizen Advocacy Center, which suspended operations in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasized the importance of linking assessment and remediation as integral components of an effective program.

Licensing boards face ongoing challenges in assessing the cause of the ethical breach and then determining suitable sanctions for ethical or behavioral violations. Common disciplinary measures, such as fines or restrictions on practice, may not adequately address the root behavioral issues. Research by Grant and Kelly highlights that professionals disciplined for severe infractions often exhibit a relatively high rate of recidivism.¹ Boards must prioritize

¹ D. Grant, K. Alfred. 2007. Sanctions and Recidivism: An Evaluation of Physician Discipline by State Medical Boards, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 32(5):867-885

public protection and focus on ensuring meaningful behavioral change to mitigate risks. Without effective remediation, boards often have limited options beyond license suspension or revocation.

This resource provides an overview of ethics assessment, training, and remediation tools that may be useful for PTs, PTAs, and physical therapy licensing boards. While it does not endorse any specific resource, it serves as a foundational reference for identifying and expanding ethics remediation options, offering a framework that can evolve over time to meet emerging needs.

Background Information: Effective Delivery of Ethics Content

Disciplinary sanctions issued by licensing boards often emphasize the outcomes of an infraction without adequately addressing the underlying causes of the error or the licensee's capacity to learn and improve from the experience. David Marx, J.D. and Chief Executive Officer of The Just Culture Company, categorizes behaviors that lead to errors into four distinct types:

1. Human Error – Unintentional mistakes resulting from factors such as lack of knowledge, skill, or situational awareness.
2. Negligent Conduct – Actions demonstrating a lack of reasonable care or failure to meet established standards.
3. Reckless Conduct – Conscious disregard of substantial risks that could harm others.
4. Intentional Rule Violations – Deliberate disregard for established rules or guidelines.²

According to Marx, these categories reflect progressively higher levels of culpability, with intentional rule violations representing the most severe form of misconduct.³ Unfortunately, many organizations apply disciplinary measures to any rule violation, regardless of intent or system breakdown. However, organizations that have revised their policies to encourage learning from mistakes have raised the disciplinary threshold, reserving significant sanctions primarily for intentional rule violations.

This perspective does not imply that severe sanctions are unwarranted for reckless or negligent behavior. Rather, it underscores the importance of considering intent as part of the evaluation process, particularly for cases of human error, negligent conduct, and reckless conduct. By doing so, licensing boards can tailor their disciplinary approaches to better address the root cause of errors and foster ethical growth among practitioners.

Addressing Limited Resources for Ethics and Ethics Remediation in Physical Therapy

Board members are correct in noting the scarcity of resources tailored specifically to ethics and ethics remediation in physical therapy. To assist licensing boards in addressing this challenge, [Appendix 1](#) of this report provides a compilation of identified resources.

²Marx, D. (2001). Patient safety and the "Just Culture": A primer for health care executives. Prepared for Columbia University under a grant provided by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (April 17, 2001). Retrieved Feb 23, 2020 from <http://www.merstm.net/support/MarxPrimer.pdf>

³Ibid

In addition to these resources, boards may explore other avenues for identifying ethics courses or programs, including:

- Collaborating with state chapters of the APTA.
- Partnering with local colleges and universities, particularly those offering physical therapy programs or specializing in health ethics.
- Consulting professionals within their jurisdiction, such as psychologists or biomedical ethicists, who possess expertise in ethics remediation and applied learning methodologies.

By leveraging these potential resources, boards can expand their options for ethics education and remediation, enabling a more comprehensive and effective approach to addressing ethical issues in physical therapy practice.

Ethics Resources Not Specific to Physical Therapy

While resources specifically tailored to physical therapy ethics are limited, there is an abundance of materials developed for the fields of medicine and nursing. This disparity is likely due to the significantly larger size of these professions and the unique ethical challenges they encounter, such as issues related to prescribing and administering medications not typically applicable to PTs or PTAs.

However, PTs and PAs face distinct ethical considerations, often shaped by the nature of their practice. Unlike many physicians or nurses, PTs and PTAs frequently spend considerable time one-on-one with patients, creating unique opportunities for ethical dilemmas to arise. These may include:

- Violating patient boundaries
- Misusing the inherent power differential between practitioner and patient
- Making inappropriate or biased judgments in patient care
- Developing an intimate emotional or physical relationship with the patient

These distinct challenges underscore the need for ethics resources that specifically address the complexities of the physical therapy profession. Boards must recognize and prioritize these unique aspects when evaluating or developing remediation programs. While many programs are geared specifically to physicians or nurses, there are a significant number that include all healthcare professionals. Information regarding many of these programs can be found below and in [Appendix 2](#).

Practitioner Remediation and Enhancement Partnership (PreP4 Patient Safety)

The *Practitioner Remediation and Enhancement Partnership* (PreP4 Patient Safety) was a pilot project launched in the 1990s to provide tools for state medical and nursing boards to collaborate with hospitals and other healthcare organizations. Its goal was to identify,

remediate, and monitor healthcare practitioners exhibiting deficiencies that did not warrant disciplinary action.⁴ This program was developed through a partnership between the U.S. Department of Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Citizen Advocacy Center.

The foundational principle of PreP4 Patient Safety was that patient safety could be improved by fostering a non-punitive environment where licensing boards and organizations could work collaboratively to address clinical deficiencies. The program emphasized early identification, education, and remediation to correct deficiencies without resorting to disciplinary action. Although the pilot program has concluded, the PreP4 Patient Safety model remains a valuable framework for developing non-punitive, education-focused remediation programs. It offers a structured approach for state licensing boards and healthcare organizations to establish assessment and remediation processes based on the program's guidelines and model rules. Adapting this concept to physical therapy could promote practitioner growth and enhance public safety by addressing deficiencies constructively rather than punitively.

Professional/Problem Based Ethics (ProBE)

The *ProBE* Program is a specialized remediation initiative designed to address ethical challenges faced by healthcare professionals. Initially developed for physicians, ProBE has since expanded to serve a broad range of healthcare practitioners, including PTs and PTAs. This live, virtual classroom program is conducted throughout the year and emphasizes individualized learning tailored to the specific ethical difficulties of each participant.

ProBE courses vary in length, ranging from one to three days, and require participants to complete preparatory work before attending. Class sizes are intentionally small, with no more than sixteen participants per session, to ensure personalized attention and targeted remediation. The program addresses a range of ethical breaches, including but not limited to:

- Boundary violations.
- Financial and billing irregularities.
- Supervisory failures.
- Communication deficiencies, including issues related to obtaining consent.
- Misuse of social media or electronic medical records.

The program employs a multi-faceted approach, incorporating direct instruction, interactive small group discussions, and individualized assessments. Certain courses also include follow-up sessions over several weeks or months. Participants may be required to complete an essay reflecting on how the principles and lessons of the ProBE program apply to the ethical violation that led to their participation. This essay is typically shared with the licensing board as part of the remediation process.

⁴ Practitioner and Remediation Enhancement Program website: <http://www.4patientsafety.net/>

At the conclusion of the course, participants are assigned one of three outcomes:

- Unconditionally Passing
- Conditionally Passing
- Failing

These outcomes are critical for licensing boards to consider when setting disciplinary requirements, as a general mandate to “pass” the course may not adequately address the unique needs of a particular licensee’s situation.

ProBE also offers an extended program called *ProBE PLUS*, which provides continued monitoring and support following completion of the initial course. This six-month program assigns participants to a ProBE faculty member for structured, ongoing interactions. This component ensures a longer-term focus on behavioral change and professional development.

Both physical therapy boards and FSBPT have referred individuals to the ProBE program, including those involved in ethical violations or National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) integrity cases. ProBE serves as a valuable resource in addressing complex ethical challenges and promoting professional accountability, which is essential to protecting the public.

Professional Boundaries, Inc

Professional Boundaries Inc (PBI Education or PBI) is dedicated to safeguarding public safety by equipping clinicians with both preventative education and tailored remedial interventions. These programs are designed to address lapses in professionalism, thereby enhancing clinical competence and improving overall performance. PBI partners with regulators, organizations, and employers to provide targeted interventions, problematic behavior coaching, and customized presentations that address specific professional challenges. PBI’s course offerings span critical topics for regulatory boards, including:

- Civility and Communication
- Professional Boundaries
- Ethics and Professionalism
- Record Keeping
- Risk Management

Participants engage in a structured process to identify and understand the flawed reasoning that led to their initial professional misconduct. Under the guidance of experienced faculty, they then develop a *Personalized Protection Plan* with actionable strategies to avoid future lapses and commit to safer, more ethical professional practices.

The Center for Professional Health at Vanderbilt

The Center for Professional Health at Vanderbilt (CPH) offers several interactive courses and other resources on a variety of professional and ethical topics for health care professionals including two 3-day interactive courses.

- ***Maintaining Professional Boundaries*** focusing on a variety of professional boundary issues, how to identify boundary issues, and establishing a plan to incorporate into a health professional's practice.
- ***Professional Development for Distressed 'Physician' Behaviors*** focusing on education and follow-up support for physicians and health professionals addressing unprofessional and inappropriate behaviors. The three-day course is followed by 3 group courses at 1-, 3-, and 6-month intervals.

The Vanderbilt Comprehensive Assessment Program, for Professionals (V-CAP)

The Vanderbilt Comprehensive Assessment Program, for Professionals (V-CAP) is a multi-disciplinary program that provides assessment and monitoring services to professionals suffering from addictions, mental health, boundary-related and/or burnout problems. The services are provided on-site at the Vanderbilt campus, and typically occur over a two to four-day period. Its services may include:

- Addiction evaluation and screening
- Complete physical examination
- Psychological interview and testing
- Neuropsychological testing
- Psychiatric assessment
- Psychosexual evaluation and boundary review
- Psychosocial assessment
- Spiritual health assessment
- Family history/genogram Cognitive Screening
- Polygraph exam as indicated
- Follow-up session(s) may be made with the assessment team to review findings and make recommendations and/or referral(s)

Professional Renewal Center

The Professional Renewal Center (PRC) is a comprehensive program offering assessment, consultation, and treatment for high accountability individuals including healthcare professionals, facing challenges that may impact professional performance or have resulted in disciplinary action by a regulatory board. The program is specifically designed to address a wide range of issues, including:

- Disruptive behavior
- Sexual misconduct
- Burnout

- Depression and mood disorders
- Anxiety disorders
- Factors influencing long-term sobriety or risk of relapse
- Psychiatric conditions affecting professional capabilities

The program begins with a thorough assessment lasting two to four days. This process includes in-depth evaluations to identify underlying factors contributing to the professional's challenges. With the participant's approval, PRC provides the assessment results and tailored recommendations to the referring entity.

For those requiring treatment, PRC offers personalized interventions, including individual and small-group therapy. These therapeutic modalities are designed to foster behavioral change, emotional resilience, and professional renewal.

The Physician Assessment and Clinical Education Program (PACE)

While its primary focus is on physicians, the Physician Assessment and Clinical Education (PACE) Program is a recognized resource for a broader range of healthcare professionals.

Since 2020, PACE CME courses have been delivered virtually, accommodating participants across diverse locations. Courses range from one to three days. The program includes four key offerings, three of which (*) feature two Maintenance of Accountability and Professionalism (MAP) coaching sessions at six- and twelve-months post-course, with an option for additional MAP sessions:

- **Clinician-Patient Communication:** Focuses on enhancing communication skills to foster trust, reduce misunderstandings, and improve patient outcomes.
- **Ethics for Medical Professionals*:** A comprehensive two-day course addressing various ethical challenges, including fraud, financial impropriety, informed consent, misrepresentation, falsification of records, sexual harassment, and conflict resolution.
- **Managing High Impact Emotions*:** Formerly titled *Anger Management for Healthcare Professionals*, this three-day course targets healthcare providers contributing to disruptive work environments through inappropriate emotional expressions.
- **Professional Boundaries*:** A three-day course designed to address workplace misconduct by exploring power dynamics, cultural factors, victim impact, and the importance of maintaining appropriate professional relationships.

PACE also offers several assessment services designed to evaluate clinical competency, professionalism, and behavioral issues.

Affiliated Monitors

Affiliated Monitors is a compliance and monitoring program originally based in Boston, Massachusetts but now with several locations throughout the U.S. They specialize in monitoring practitioners that have

been sanctioned by oversight agencies. Services offered to healthcare professionals include billing and coding audits/monitoring, boundaries oversight and chaperoning, clinical competence assessment, practice-based independent monitoring,

Assessment of Ethics

The objective assessment of ethical decision-making is widely regarded as a critical component of effective remediation programs. However, few regulatory boards make regular use of ethics assessment instruments. While many tools exist to evaluate ethical decision-making, their application within healthcare regulatory contexts remains limited. The Defining Issues Test (DIT and its updated version, DIT-2) has been utilized extensively over the past three decades. In dentistry, instruments such as the Dental Ethical Sensitivity Test (DEST) and the Dental Ethical Reasoning and Judgment Test (DERJT) have been developed to address ethical complexities specific to the field. Similarly, the Ethical Sensitivity Questionnaire for Nursing Students (ESQ-NS) was introduced to address the growing intricacies of healthcare ethics in nursing education.⁵

Despite their availability, these tools are predominantly applied in pre-licensure education and training, primarily with students. The literature reveals little evidence that licensing boards employ these instruments to evaluate ethical attitudes or decision-making among practitioners. The reasons for this limited utilization by licensing boards are unclear but may include a lack of awareness regarding the tools' existence, insufficient information and training in their application, or an absence of expertise in administering these assessments effectively. However, an opportunity exists to explore the broader integration of ethics assessment tools into remediation and regulatory efforts to enhance public protection and professional accountability.

Effective Delivery of Ethics Content

The challenge of effectively teaching ethical decision-making to physical therapy providers mirrors a broader gap in evidence-based strategies for addressing ethics education across healthcare professions. While research in fields like medicine, nursing, dentistry, and psychology has provided valuable insights, there remains a scarcity of targeted studies for physical therapy.

Existing studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between ethics education, including the discussion of ethical dilemmas, and improved performance on ethical decision-making assessments. Handelsman's concept of "Ethics by Osmosis" underscores the value of structured

⁵ Muramatsu, T., Nakamura, M., Okada, E., Katayama, H., & Ojima, T. (2019). The development and validation of the Ethical Sensitivity Questionnaire for Nursing Students. *BMC medical education*, 19(1), 215. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-019-1625-8>

exposure to real-world ethical scenarios, which enhances individuals' ability to navigate complex ethical decisions more effectively than passive learning approaches.⁶

Rees and Knight (2007) highlighted the need to reevaluate how professionalism and ethics are assessed. Their work cautions against relying solely on observed behaviors, which may not accurately reflect underlying ethical attitudes. The authors argue that educators and regulators risk failing to identify individuals who exhibit professional behaviors outwardly but lack the ethical grounding to support long-term professionalism.⁷ This disconnect emphasizes the importance of developing robust assessment tools that evaluate both attitudes and behaviors, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of ethical competency.

Developing & Facilitating Ethical Decision Making in Physical Therapy

The development of ethical decision-making skills in physical therapy follows a continuum, spanning the entirety of a professional career. The assessment of ethical decision-making should be tailored to the practitioner's stage of professional development—student, entry-level, or seasoned professional. Expectations for behavior must align with the individual's level of experience to identify when ethical breaches occur and determine the most appropriate responses. This progression emphasizes the importance of peer mentoring, leveraging support networks, and applying ethical principles in varied and complex scenarios. Such development requires deliberate practice and ongoing reflection, highlighting its dynamic and evolving nature.

Boards must explore evidence-based strategies and methodologies to evaluate, assess, and enhance ethical decision-making skills. The work of several authors encourages the use of James Rest's four-component model of ethical decision making.^{8,9}

Rest's Four Stage model of ethical decision-making:

Stage	Action
1	Recognition of an ethical situation and emotional response.
2	Understanding of the moral issues involved.
3	Decide on a course of action
4	Carry out appropriate response.

The four-component model is easy to understand and provides an opportunity to develop assessment protocols in the future. It has been adapted by others into decision-making tools such as the Realm-Individual Process-Situation (RIPS) model.¹⁰ The RIPS model is a decision-

⁶ Handelsman, MM (1986) Problems with ethics training by osmosis. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 17, 371-372.

⁷ Rees, C, Knight, L. (2007) Viewpoint: the trouble with assessing students' professionalism: Theoretical insights from sociocognitive psychology. *Academic Medicine* 82(1) 46-50.

⁸ Rest, J. (1986) *Moral Development: Advances in Research and Theory*. New York: Praeger.

⁹ Rest, J.(1988) Is professional school too late to teach ethics? ethics easier said than done. *Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics* 1(1), 22-26.

¹⁰ Swisher, L., Arslanian, L. Davis, C. (2005) The realm-individual-process situation (RIPs) model of ethical decision making. *HPA Resource*: 5(3):1, 3-8.

making framework used in physical therapy and other healthcare professions to address ethical dilemmas. It is often referenced in APTA resources to guide professionals in systematically analyzing and resolving ethical issues. The RIPS model provides a structured way to 1) identify the ethical aspects of a situation, 2) analyze the interplay between personal, organizational, and societal factors, and 3) develop an actionable and sound, ethical response.¹¹ A breakdown of the model is as follows:

1. Realm: Focus of the ethical issue

- Individual Realm: Concerns the rights, duties, relationships, and behaviors of individuals.
- Organizational/Institutional Realm: Involves policies, procedures, and organizational culture.
- Societal Realm: Relates to the common good, justice, and societal expectations.

2. Individual Process: Ethical components needed to resolve the issue

- Moral Sensitivity: Recognizing the ethical situation.
- Moral Judgment: Deciding on the right course of action.
- Moral Motivation: Prioritizing ethical values over other interests.
- Moral Courage: Implementing the ethical decision, even in the face of adversity.

3. Situation: Context of the ethical issue

- Issue or Problem: A simple disagreement or question about what is right.
- Dilemma: A situation where two or more ethical principles conflict.
- Distress: When you know the right course of action but are constrained from taking it.
- Temptation: A choice between right and wrong, where wrong may be more appealing.
- Silence: Ethical issues are not addressed or acknowledged.

De las Fuentes emphasizes the distinction between the ethical decision-making skills expected of entry-level physical therapy students and those expected of advanced or experienced PTs and PTAs. While entry-level learners focus on developing foundational ethical understanding, advanced practitioners are expected to apply and continually refine higher-order ethical decision-making skills in diverse, complex contexts.¹² It would be expected that advanced skills will involve making culturally appropriate, reasoned decisions regarding ethical situations. Individuals with more advanced ethical decision-making skills demonstrate the ability to integrate moral judgment abilities into all aspects of professional interaction. The advanced

¹¹ Sousa, J., Goncalves-Lopes, S., & breu, V. (2021). Aging and ethical challenged in physiotherapy. *Annals of Medicine*. DOI:10.1080/07853890.2021.1896437

¹² de las Fuentes, (2005) Competency training in ethics education and practice. *Professional Psychology, Research and Practice*. 36(4) 362-366.

provider will demonstrate ethical behaviors when confronted with various types of learning situations, case studies, role plays and vignettes. They will also demonstrate professional behaviors that include appropriate interactions with peers, supervisors, patients, and the organizations where they either work or study. The evolution from entry-level to advanced ethical decision-making skills requires a focus on continual education and opportunities for application in real-world and simulated environments.

However, physical therapy as a profession has yet to establish comprehensive frameworks or methodologies to effectively educate, prevent, or recognize breaches of ethical conduct or remediate them. This gap presents a challenge for licensing boards tasked with ensuring public safety and maintaining professional standards. By addressing this critical area, boards and the profession can move toward more effective identification, education, and remediation of ethical breaches, ensuring both public protection and the integrity of the physical therapy profession.

Challenges and Opportunities in Ethics Education in Physical Therapy Education Programs

The Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) provides overarching guidelines emphasizing interprofessional and intra-professional learning to develop ethics, values, communication, and professional roles. However, these guidelines lack specificity in content delivery and pedagogy, and the effectiveness of existing approaches has not been rigorously studied.

Studies highlight the necessity of equipping educators with tools to recognize and address lapses in ethical conduct effectively. For example, Indiana University's School of Medicine provided faculty training in this area, enhancing educators' ability to intervene appropriately. Offering such training to regulatory board members may benefit the regulatory community, strengthening their confidence to recommend and oversee remediation.

Ethical decision-making is a challenging area for physical therapy students. Despite growing emphasis on ethical competencies, many students report greater confidence in clinical and technical skills than in addressing ethical dilemmas during practical experiences. This suggests students do not feel adequately prepared to handle complex situations with ethical implications. Research across health professions shows that early ethics education, often abstract and detached from clinical settings, is less effective. Instead, experiential learning, where ethical decision-making is modeled in real-world scenarios or through narratives, stories, and videos, yields stronger outcomes. Interaction with role models demonstrating ethical conduct profoundly influences students' professional behaviors. Education programs may not currently be providing enough training to allow students to feel competent in this area and meet their needs.

Insights from disciplines like psychology may provide useful recommendations. At a 2002 psychology competencies conference, key elements of ethics training and lifelong assessment were identified. Such approaches underscore the need for continual development of ethical decision-making skills throughout a career, integrating evidence-based methodologies that extend beyond pre-licensure education. The use of baseline assessment tools such as ethics-specific scores separate from licensing examinations may identify potential issues pre-graduation and licensure. The psychologists recommended that their students take the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology and the score from the test be made available to both the education program and the board allowing customized ethics education for the individual. Establishing an individual's baseline has implications for future ethics remediation for licensing boards.

Another interesting recommendation that the group made is for the licensing board to provide information to the education programs about the adjudication of their graduates. Providing the programs with trends about their graduates may assist them in determining characteristics or warning signs about individuals that may have challenges in ethical decision making.²² This feedback loop could significantly enhance physical therapy ethics education.

Challenges in Ethical Behavior Development

Research has revealed a decline in ethical decision-making skills and professional behavior during the progression of medical school, attributable to detachment from clinical context and negative role modeling.^{13, 14} The University of Washington's School of Medicine is one of many that recognize professionalism cannot be taught in the same manner as other areas of the curriculum. Ethics education is typically divorced from the clinical setting and the discussions are not in the actual context of the practitioner-patient relationship. A rule-based approach to learning about ethical challenges is not effective. Coulehan found that for learning to be effective and therefore useful, the student must experience the professionalism that involves ethical decision making through interaction using contemporary narratives or observing role model professionals.¹⁵ If neither of those options are available, it may be possible to achieve the same effect through stories and video. Presenting rules, behaviors, and didactic lessons in a classroom environment gives little opportunity for context-based understanding.

However, regardless of the tools used with students, inconsistent or inadequate conduct by faculty undermines efforts to instill ethical behaviors, necessitating institutional self-reflection and reform. Goldstein et al pointed out that the teaching of ethical decision making is not just for the novice as every student could reflect on an instance where they observed either

¹³ Satterwhite, RC, Satterwhite WM, Enarson, C.(2000) An ethical paradox: the effect of unethical conduct on medical students' values. J. Medical Ethics.;26:462-65.

¹⁴ Christakis, DA, Feudtner C. (1993) Ethics in a short white coat: the ethical dilemmas that medical students confront. Academic Medicine.;68:249-54.

¹⁵ Coulehan, J. Viewpoint: (2005)Today's professionalism: engaging the mind but not the heart. Academic Medicine;80:892-88.

residents or faculty engaging in questionable ethical or unprofessional behavior.¹⁶ This assertion is supported by a study done by Brainard et al in which they determined that students felt that the current literature about ethics was not relevant because students' opinions were that the largest barrier to learning about medical ethics was inappropriate conduct by medical educators.¹⁷ The behavior of the educators and the subsequent modeling of that behavior appears to be a very significant influence on the student.

To advance the field, further research is needed to identify effective strategies for delivering ethics content and evaluating outcomes in physical therapy education. By leveraging interdisciplinary insights and developing tailored assessment tools, the profession can better prepare practitioners to address ethical challenges confidently and competently.

Summary and Conclusions

Unlike the field of physical therapy, the dissemination of ethics education in healthcare professions such as dentistry, medicine, nursing, and psychology has been extensively studied. Ethical remediation programs specifically targeting PTs are notably scarce. Although many existing programs are open to all healthcare professionals, their design and content often prioritize the needs of physicians and nurses, which may limit their applicability to physical therapy practitioners.

Key Observations and Challenges

1. **Limited Physical Therapy-Specific Resources:** Few ethics education and remediation programs are tailored to the specific needs of physical therapy practitioners, leaving a significant gap for PT licensing boards.
2. **Applicability of General Programs:** While some existing resources are open to PTs and PTAs, the predominance of physician and nurse participants may limit the relevance and effectiveness of these programs for physical therapy providers.
3. **Sanctioned Practitioner Focus:** Resources that do address ethical education in physical therapy often target general audiences rather than sanctioned practitioners requiring remediation.
4. **Effectiveness of Ethics Education:** Research indicates that interactive approaches, such as scenario-based discussions and modeling ethical decision-making, are among the most effective strategies for fostering ethical behavior.
5. **Ongoing Monitoring:** Evidence suggests that one-time training sessions, regardless of their length, may not be sufficient to prevent recurrences of ethical violations. Programs incorporating follow-up assessments and long-term monitoring have shown greater success in addressing and maintaining ethical standards.

¹⁶ Goldstein, E, Maestas, R, Fryer-Edwards, K, Wenrich, M, Oelschlager, A, Baernstein, A, Kimball, H. (2006) Professionalism in medical education: An institutional challenge. *Academic Medicine*, 81(10)871-876.

¹⁷ Brainard, (2007) A. Viewpoint: Learning professionalism: a view from the trenches. *Academic Medicine*. 82(11)1010-1014.

6. **Assessment Needs:** Determining reliable methods for assessing ethical behavior in clinicians remains an area requiring development. Boards need tools and processes to accurately identify ethical violations and tailor appropriate remediation strategies.
7. **Evolving Evidence in Remediation:** Licensing boards must remain informed about advancements in ethics education and remediation to ensure their approaches align with the best available evidence.

Conclusion & Opportunities for Physical Therapy

By incorporating interdisciplinary insights and creating tailored, evidence-based approaches, physical therapy can enhance its ethics education framework. Future efforts could include the development of robust assessment tools, iterative feedback mechanisms, and continuous training for both faculty and regulatory board members. These initiatives would not only address current challenges but also prepare practitioners to navigate ethical dilemmas confidently and competently throughout their careers.

Regulatory boards are tasked with the critical responsibility of ensuring that PTs and PTAs deliver services rooted in evidence-based practices and ethical decision-making. Just as the public expects physical therapy services to adhere to high standards, boards must strive to handle ethical deficiencies with rigor and informed judgment. While existing programs designed for other healthcare professions can serve as valuable models, there is an urgent need to develop and refine resources specifically for the unique context of physical therapy. This will not only enhance the profession's ability to address ethical challenges but also uphold public trust in physical therapy practitioners and their licensing boards.

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Appendix 1

Examples of Ethics Resources Specific to Physical Therapy (Not all Inclusive)

Provider	Course Title	Mode	CEU/ Hours	Website/ Contact Number
HomeCEUConnection.com (need to go through their Web site state-by-state)	A variety of courses in the topic area of ethics, laws, rules specific for physical therapy providers based on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis	Varies	1-3	www.HomeCEUConnection.com
GSC Home Study Courses (need to go through their Web site state-by-state)	Ethical Issues and Decision Making 2 nd edition	HS	5	https://www.elitecme.com/physical-therapy
	Ethical Practices with Older Adults, updated 1 st edition	HS	4	
At Home Seminars	Promoting Legal & Ethical Awareness Module 1	HS	4 hours	www.athomeseminars.com
	Promoting Legal & Ethical Awareness Module 2	HS	4 hours	
	Promoting Legal & Ethical Awareness Module 3	HS	4 hours	
	Promoting Legal & Ethical Awareness TX Specific	HS	5 hours	
PTCourses.com	Ethics and Jurisprudence: Advice from Aristotle, “Do What is Beautiful”	HS	4	http://ptcourses.com/
	Ethics for Physical Therapy Clinicians: Dealing with Child Abuse Legally, Ethically, and with Compassion	HS	3	
	Ethics for Physical Therapy Clinicians: Real World Cases (2019+)	HS	2	
	Ethics and Jurisprudence: Advice from Aristotle, “Do What is Beautiful” GA, HI, TN	HS	4	
Wild Iris Medical Education	State mandated coursed in child abuse recognition and reporting, CA ethics, laws and regulations			www.therapyceu.com
	Ethics & Jurisprudence CA, GA, IN, MS, TN, UT, WI	HS	2	www.cheapceus.com

Provider	Course Title	Mode	CEU/ Hours	Website/ Contact Number
Innovative Educational Services	Ethics DE, IL, LA, NY, OK, PA	HS	2	
Allied Health Education	Ethics in Physical Therapy How to Navigate as a Licensed Therapist	HS	2 or 3	https://www.alliedhealthed.com/courses
American Physical Therapy Association APTA	Professionalism Module 1: Introduction to Professionalism	HS	2 or 3	https://learningcenter.apta.org/products/professionalism-module-1-introduction-to-professionalism
	Professionalism Module 2: History of Professionalism in Physical Therapy			https://learningcenter.apta.org/products/professionalism-module-2-history-of-professionalism-in-physical-therapy
	Professionalism Module 3: Ethical Compass			https://learningcenter.apta.org/products/professionalism-module-3-ethical-compass https://learningcenter.apta.org/products/ethical-challenges-in-the-academic-and-clinical-settings
	Ethical Challenges in the Academic and Clinical Setting	HS	2	https://learningcenter.apta.org/products/ethical-practice-in-post-acute-care-in-2020-and-beyond
	Ethical Practice in Post Acute Care in 2020 and Beyond	HS	1	

HS: Home Study OS: Onsite TC: Teleconference

Appendix 2

Ethics Remediation Resources That May Be Applicable to Healthcare Professionals

Provider	Course Title	Description	Mode	CEU/ Hours	Website
Physician Assessment Clinical Education Program (PACE), University of California, San Diego	Clinician-Patient Communication	Focuses on improving participants healthcare communications skills over a 1- day course.	On-line Interactive Course	Not Noted	http://www.paceprogram. ucsd.edu
	Ethics for Healthcare Professionals, Managing High Impact Emotions, and/or Professional Boundaries		Educational Training Program	27 to 39.5	http://www.paceprogram. ucsd.edu
Center for Personalized Education for Physicians (CPEP)	PROBE Professional/Problem Based Ethics (ProBE)	Workshop limited to 16. Focuses on each individual's specific issues and involves reflection, interaction and group work.	Interactive Course	25.25	https://www.cpepd.org
Center for Professional Health at Vanderbilt	Maintaining Professional Boundaries	This course is for physicians and other health professionals who need education about the issues of sexual boundaries in their offices and clinic; it emphasizes understanding of general and sexual boundary issues. This is not a course for physicians with an active sexual addiction.	Interactive Course	24	https://medsites.vumc.org/ cph/home

Provider	Course Title	Description	Mode	CEU/ Hours	Website
	Vanderbilt Comprehensive Assessment Program (VCAP)	The Vanderbilt Comprehensive Assessment Program, for Professionals (V-CAP) is a multi-disciplinary program that provides the highest quality assessment and monitoring services to professionals suffering from addictions, mental health, boundary-related and burnout problems.	Testing and evaluation	X	https://www.vumc.org/psychiatry/vcap
Professional Boundaries, Inc (PBI)	Professional Boundaries	Intensive 3-day course addressing boundary violations (both sexual and nonsexual), misconduct, dual relationships, and supervisory issues.	Live, small-group workshop, available virtually	24	https://pbieducation.com/referrals/
	Elevating Civility and Communication in Health Care	Intensive 3-day course addressing harassment, anger, disruptive behavior, and non-collegial or uncooperative communication with patients or colleagues.	Live, small-group workshop, available virtually	30	
	Ethics and Professionalism	Intensive 1- or 2-day courses available, variable based on the severity of the infraction. Addresses ethical violations, enhances professionalism, and mitigates risks.	Live, small-group workshop, available virtually	15-22	
	Record Keeping	Intensive 2-day course addressing documentation that	Live, small-group	17	

Provider	Course Title	Description	Mode	CEU/ Hours	Website
		falls short or does not comply with laws, regulations, or expectations.	workshop, available virtually		
	Risk Management Essentials	Intermediary 1-day course addressing common ethics, communication, boundaries, documentation, and prescribing issues.	Live, small-group workshop, available virtually	10	
	Accountability and Extended Follow Up Program	Maintenance and Accountability Seminars. Weekly 1-hour, faculty-led discussions focusing on continued accountability, self-introspection, and continued learning after an initial remedial course has been taken.	Live, small-group workshop, available virtually	12	
	Professional Coaching	Held one-on-one via video conference with faculty. Individualized to address case-specific issues of concern, professional misconduct, or other improprieties.	Live, one-on-one sessions, available virtually	Custom	
Professional Renewal Center		Provides comprehensive ethics evaluations, compliance auditing, planning and training.	Monitoring/compliance Programs	NA	https://prckansas.org/wp/
Affiliated Monitors		Customized Monitoring Programs to address concerns about competence, boundaries, ethics, billing, office systems, practices, etc.	Monitoring/compliance Programs	NA	https://www.affiliatedmonitors.com/healthcare-professionals-and-other-licensees/

Provider	Course Title	Description	Mode	CEU/ Hours	Website
		Individualized Clinical Skills Assessments Personalized Education Programs Compliance & Best Practice Programs –individuals, healthcare companies & corporate practices			
AJ Novick Group, Inc	Anger Management	Designed for individuals who need to take an anger management course for a court order, at the request of their employer, or for personal reasons or requirements. Anger management is an educational class. It is not psychotherapy or a substitute for psychological or medical advice or counseling. Full length self-assessment program in 12 and 26-hour programs.	Online self-paced, home study option	8, 12, or 26	https://www.ajnovickgroup.com/anger-management/
	Disruptive Physician Coaching	Disruptive physician coaching (options): 1) Participate in 1:1 coaching for 8-12, 50-minute sessions (in-person or synchronous by phone/Skype. 2) Participate in an 8 hour all day (on-site) 1:1 coaching session (Laguna Beach, CA). Includes assessment, structured curriculum, progress reports,	*No online programs allowed for disruptive physician coaching		https://www.ajnovickgroup.com/disruptive-physician/

Provider	Course Title	Description	Mode	CEU/ Hours	Website
		DVD power point, pre- and post-tests, and post program follow ups.			
Alden March Bioethics Institute	Better Doctoring	A web-based, distance-learning seminar on medical ethics and professionalism for physician continuing education. Occurs over 15 days, estimated total time of 25-30 hours, at an approximate cost of \$2,500.	Online	25	http://www.amc.edu/Academic/bioethics/educational_programs/betterdoctoring/index.cfm