



# Joint Connections

## Spring 2024

*Highlights from UNMC's Physical Therapy Program*

### In This Issue

---

- Cover Story, page 1
- Students, page 2
- Faculty, page 5
- Alumni, page 8
- Administrative Staff, page 9
- Global Health Opportunities Program, page 10
- Munroe-Meyer Institute, page 11
- Program Updates, page 12
- Scholarly Activity, page 13
- Announcements, page 16



*Pictured: The UNMC Physical Therapy Class of 2024*

### The Class of 2024 becomes the 20th DPT graduating class

On Saturday, May 4, 2024, UNMC's Class of 2024 Doctor of Physical Therapy graduates will become the 20th class to graduate with their Doctor of Physical Therapy degree.

The UNMC Physical Therapy Program began as a two-year program in 1970, offering a Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy degree. The first class of 12 students graduated in 1972. The program was fully accredited with the first graduating class in June 1972 and the program has been continuously accredited since that time.

As the profession of physical therapy evolved, so too did the entry-level requirements. In the fall of 1989, the program increased in length from two to three years, awarding a Master of Physical Therapy (MPT) degree.



*Kathleen G. Volkman, PT, MS, NCS to retire, page 5*

*continued on page 11.*

Physical Therapy Program

Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

College of Allied Health Professions

University of Nebraska Medical Center

984420 Nebraska Medical Center  
Omaha, Nebraska 68198

**Contact Us:**

[pteducation@unmc.edu](mailto:pteducation@unmc.edu)  
[www.unmc.edu/alliedhealth/pt](http://www.unmc.edu/alliedhealth/pt)

## Students



*The Class of 2024 celebrates on October 11, 2023, prior to departure for clinicals. The Kearney cohort connected via Zoom and is pictured on the screens behind the Omaha cohort.*

### PT3 Send-Off

On Wednesday, October 11, 2023, the Physical Therapy Program celebrated the PT3 students prior to their departure for clinical experiences. The class chose the theme for their farewell, “Dress like your future patient.”

Welcome remarks were delivered by associate program director Sara E. Bills, PT, DPT, GCS. UNMC Alumni Association associate director Kat Hamilton, MSM, was also on hand to wish the students well.

This was followed by a game of Guess Who, organized and run by Christina Sullivan, a member of the Class of 2024 and its Omaha Treasurer. It featured baby photos and fun facts about the PT faculty and several associated faculty members. The Class of 2024 answered via Kahoot, a game-based learning platform that they have become very familiar with in their college and PT school courses.

Silly prizes were also given to several lucky recipients.

---

### Nebraska Area Health Education Center Program

The Nebraska Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Scholars Program is part of a national initiative that prepares students in the health professions who want to serve in rural or urban underserved areas. It is a two-year program of study in which scholars are assigned to a regional AHEC center based on where they hope to work in the state. This helps connect them to potential employers, community leaders, and access to workshops focused on health issues facing Nebraska.

The scholars choose from two certifications. Program requirements include that they complete 40 hours of didactic training hours per academic year in conjunction with their health profession program curriculum. They also complete 40 hours of community-based and/or experiential training

in rural and/or urban underserved areas each year. Core topic areas include: interprofessional education, behavioral health integration, social determinants of health, practice transformation, and cultural competency.

Of the over 70 scholars accepted into this year's Nebraska AHEC Scholars Program cohort, 20% are UNMC physical therapy students.

“I've enjoyed all the opportunities to learn more about rural healthcare and how to advocate for quality care for all. There are many issues in rural settings just like cities but they can be overlooked and the program did a great job of addressing a lot of barriers and introducing us to some ways to best handle those issues.”

— UNMC Physical Therapy Student



## 2023 Career Fair



*Pictured (l-r): PT students Christian Keays, Tyson Belitz and Sam Nissly at the 2023 Career Fair*

The 2023 Students of the University of Nebraska American Physical Therapy Association (SUN-APTA) Career Fair was held on Friday, October 6, in the Truhlsen Events Center at UNMC.

This year, the event was expanded to include opportunities for UNMC's occupational therapy students.

Forty-six vendors attended. The fair introduced students to possible employment opportunities, clinical sites, and many aspects of rehabilitation.

Funds raised through the Career Fair will be used to supplement costs for the following: support of research and advocacy efforts of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), hosting PT awareness events, and community service including the annual Joint Effort Volleyball tournament that raises funds for the Arthritis Foundation of Nebraska.

For information about the 2024 Career Fair, please click [here](#).



*PT2 students on October 7, 2023 (l-r): Kaden Zwiener, Jessica Braun, Felisha Sheil, Abby Aplaca, Calli Krebs, MacKenzie Doescher, Chailey Bollens, and Kailey Weichel*

## Seventh Annual Wilderness Wellness Run/Walk

On October 7, 2023, the UNMC PT2 Kearney students hosted the Seventh Annual Wilderness Wellness Run/Walk at Cottonmill Park in Kearney. Participants were able to choose both the mode (run or walk) and the length (5K or 1 mile) of their race. There was also an option to participate virtually for anyone outside Kearney. Proceeds from this community event will be used for professional development for members of the class.

This year's sponsors include Advanced Chiropractic, Black Sheep Fitness, Downtown Fitness Kearney, Central Nebraska Rehab Services, Kearney Country Club, Scooters Coffee, O'Malleys, CHI Health, and Reynoldson Shell Norfolk.



## UNMC participation in Nebraska Student Special Interest Group event



*Pictured (l-r): Megan Frazee, PT, DPT, OCS, MTC, FAAOMPT; NSSIG Vice President PT2 Cassie Collins; NSSIG Secretary PT2 Carsyn Zumpfe; Physical Therapy Education Program Director Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD and her dog, Ollie, a Certified Therapy Dog.*

The Nebraska Student Special Interest Group (NSSIG) of the APTA Nebraska organization

hosted a Student Conclave and Advocacy Dinner on November 4, 2023, at Southeast Community College in Lincoln. The event was open to all Nebraska PT and PTA students. UNMC PT student and NSSIG Vice President Cassie Collins stated, "Our goal with the event was to connect students, give them the chance to explore topics outside of their school's curriculum, and to network with employers in the area."

Toward that end, the following speaker sessions were offered: Residency Education (UNMC's Megan Frazee, PT, DPT, OCS, MTC, FAAOMPT and Creighton University's Heather Knight, PT, DPT, NCS); Cash-Based Practice (Judy Gelber, PT, DPT, OCS); Nebraska Loan Repayment Program (Jok Akech); and Travel Physical Therapy (Melanie Sallas).

Following the sessions, the students enjoyed dinner at the Great Plains Culinary Institute. State Senator Tony Vargas gave the keynote speech. He encouraged those in attendance to connect with their elected representatives, noting the importance of having connections with experts in a variety of disciplines.

The event also featured a vendor area in which the UNMC PT Orthopedic Residency program had a booth to promote advanced practice and education. Ollie, a Certified Therapy Dog, was on hand to greet people who stopped by the booth.



*Nebraska PT and PTA students attend the Nebraska Student Special Interest Group (NSSIG) Student Conclave and Advocacy Dinner on November 4 at Southeast Community College in Lincoln.*

### Kathleen G. Volkman, PT, MS, NSC to retire



*Kathleen G. Volkman, PT, MS, NCS*

Associate professor Kathleen G. Volkman, PT, MS, NCS will retire effective June 14, 2024. Her dedication, hard work and leadership over more than 16 years have left an indelible mark on the PT program and its faculty, students and staff.

Professor Volkman earned a Bachelor's degree in Allied Health Science-Physical Therapy from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1979. In 2004, she earned a Master's degree in Exercise Science from the University of Nebraska-Omaha. She has been an American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties Clinical Specialist in Neurologic Physical Therapy since 2009. Professor Volkman was hired as an assistant professor in the program in 2007; named an associate director in 2014; and promoted to the rank of associate professor in 2016.

Kathy has devoted her time and expertise as a faculty member at UNMC to educating students. This has manifested itself in a variety of ways, from a traditional role in classroom instruction; to leading the program's latest curriculum revision; and including serving on the Pathways committee. This includes the Rural Health Opportunities Program (RHOP) and the Kearney Health Opportunities Program (KHOP). In this role, she has ensured that students in this program are prepared, traveled to state colleges and universities to interview students, and collaborated with faculty and advisors at those institutions. She has also advanced the Global Health Opportunities Program (GHOP) with many trips abroad to China.

Professor Volkman's teaching portfolio includes teaching Neuroscience Foundations, Neuromuscular Physical Therapy and

Psychosocial Aspects of Healthcare. She has served in a variety of roles in the neuromuscular courses including instructor, course coordinator and Omaha site coordinator. From 2008 to the present, Kathy has also served as a faculty advisor for the student-run SHARING clinic for under-served and under-insured individuals in our community. She has received several teaching awards.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Professor Volkman has worked to promote and improve stroke systems of care. She has served on the Nebraska Stroke Advisory Council's Rehabilitation Task Force since 2010 and on its Steering Committee since 2012. She has presented research at regional and national meetings on neurological assessment and care, and on physical therapist education at the national and international level. From 2019 until the present, she has also served as a member of the American Heart Association's Post-Acute Stroke Rehabilitation Standards Writing Group.

As an associate director, Professor Volkman has been a steady leader. In this role, Kathy led the program's most recent curriculum revision. This revision was in the planning stages for several years and was implemented in the Fall 2019. In 2020, she assisted with organization during the COVID-19 pandemic including planning to meet students' needs to progress through the program and graduate on time.

Of her retirement, Kathy states, "I have enjoyed serving as a faculty member and colleague in the Physical Therapy Program and the College of Allied Health Professions. These almost seventeen years have gone by quickly! I have met and worked with wonderful people during my time in academia - students, staff, and faculty. I want to thank those that have invested in my career at UNMC and all the clinicians who have come to assist in teaching our students. In my retirement, I am looking to have more time with my children, including three who live outside the Omaha area, and seeing more of my grandchildren. My husband and I have some plans to travel, and I look forward to volunteering with service organizations, learning more about gardening, reading lots of interesting books, and returning to knitting and sewing projects. I will miss my fellow faculty and my students but I leave feeling confident of the strength of this program in the future and am proud to have been a part of it."

"Kathy's friendship and guidance have been valuable to me personally. Her absence will be felt by us all. May this new phase be filled with the joy of family, a more flexible schedule, relaxation with a good book, and many other fulfilling activities. Congratulations, Kathy!" – Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD





*College of Allied Health Professions Dean Kyle P. Meyer, PhD, MS, PT, FASAHP; Teresa M. Cochran, PT, DPT, MA, GCS, FNAP; and Senior Vice Chancellor H. Dele Davies, MD, at the UNMC Impact in Education Awards ceremony on February 29, 2024.*

### **Dr. Teresa Cochran recipient of UNMC Education Scholar Award**

Associate Professor Teresa M. Cochran, PT, DPT, MA, GCS, FNAP, is the recipient of the 2023-2024 UNMC Interprofessional Education Scholar Award. This award is one of only eight Impact in Education Awards which are the highest education-related awards conferred by UNMC.

This award recognizes an individual or team who has demonstrated excellence in Interprofessional Education (IPE), including teaching in an interprofessional learning environment, disseminating IPE results and best practices and contributing to IPE advancement.

Dr. Cochran was hired as an associate professor in the UNMC Physical Therapy Program in 2017. In 2018, she became the College of Allied Health Professions assistant dean for the Health Science Education Complex.

Even prior to her work at UNMC, Dr. Cochran was deeply invested in Interprofessional Education during her tenure as a faculty member at Creighton University. In fact, in 2016, Dr. Cochran was inducted as a Distinguished Fellow of National Academies of Practice, recognizing her sustained leadership in interprofessional education.

At UNMC, Dr. Cochran participates with the Interprofessional Academy of Educators' IPE special interest group, the UNMC IPE Curriculum Committee and co-chairs the College of Allied Health Professions IPE Committee. She holds the CQuence Distinguished Professorship for Innovation in Health Care to help coordinate an IPE trajectory for the college's 15 programs. Dr. Cochran has published refereed articles and book chapters on the topic of IPE, 45 of her national/ international presentations relate to IPE and team-based care, and her grant collaborations involving patient safety and IPE total \$1.1 million. Her recent research connected stroke survivors in rural Nebraska with interprofessional tele-teams of health students from three universities.

Dr. Cochran has been involved in IPE on the national level, as well, including serving as a charter member of the American Interprofessional Health Collaborative (the member community of the National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education). She has served several capacities within the National Academies of Practice, including development and implementation of interprofessional federal advocacy training for legislation supporting team-based care in the United States.



*Nikki Sleddens, PT, PhD*



*Tessa Wells, PT, DPT, CEEAA, GCS*

### **Sleddens and Wells receive honorable mention**

UNMC's iEXCEL Innovation Awards recognize faculty, students, and staff who create and implement new ideas that foster innovation in teaching, research, and scholarship using the assets of iEXCEL and Davis Global Center.

On March 12, 2024, PT faculty members Nikki Sleddens, PT, PhD and Tessa Wells, PT, DPT, CEEAA, GCS received an honorable mention from iEXCEL for their Collaborative Interprofessional Education (IPE) project: Early Acute Service Experience (EASE).

EASE is a requirement for PT and OT students during their first year of training. It consists of each student spending a weekend with a physical therapist, physical therapist assistant or occupational therapist in the inpatient environment. Students are able provide hands-on assistance as needed to the therapist. The intent of the program is to both better prepare students for the inpatient clinical environment and also to give back to two of our biggest clinical partners, Nebraska Medicine in Omaha and CHI Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney.

Prior to participation in EASE, each student completes an online training module and attends a training session in person to prepare them for their weekend of service. In this training session, the iEXCEL high-fidelity hospital simulation environment is utilized to allow students to experience the hospital environment and specialized equipment. They learn to safely manipulate hospital bed controls, don and doff sequential compression devices, reposition lines and tubes to improve ease of patient movement, and correctly enable and disable chair alarms to maintain a safe patient care environment.

Students practice with a peer acting as a simulated patient to prepare for assisting allied health professionals with patient mobility tasks including bed mobility, transfers and gait training.

In response to receiving this honorable mention, Dr. Sleddens states, "It reinforces the importance of collaboration across programs in the College of Allied Health Professions to prepare our students to be leaders in the workforce for interprofessional collaboration."

---

### **Dr. Wellsandt participates in Sports Medicine symposium**



*Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD, OCS and her son Charlie at Folsom Field in September 2023.*

Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD, OCS, presented at the 18th annual University of Colorado (CU) Sports Medicine Symposium in Boulder, Colorado, on September 15, 2023. Her presentations were focused on anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury, including topics of non-operative management, psychological considerations for returning to play, and return-to-sport decision making after surgery.

The symposium was held at the CU Stadium Club at Folsom Field and attended by physical therapists, athletic trainers, orthopaedic surgeons, and other sports medicine professionals.



**Julia (Kenealy) Collier, PT, DPT**



*Julia Collier, PT, DPT pictured with her family, including husband, Clinton, and children Finley (3), Hudson (1), and Harper (1) in November 2023.*

In October 2022, UNMC Alumnus Julia (Kenealy) Collier, PT, DPT (Class of 2013) was promoted from Clinic Director (Director of Rehab) to Area Director of Operations for her company, EmpowerMe Wellness in Southern California.

**Can you explain your role and responsibilities?**

“I now oversee 14 communities throughout the California Inland Empire Region. My company, EmpowerMe Wellness, provides outpatient therapy services to those residing in senior living communities (independent living, assisted living, and the memory care units in those communities). Some duties I have include hiring staff, managing schedules, managing key performance indexes, supervising PTAs, providing therapy treatments as needed, communicating with community staff, and managing any issues at the community and regional level.”

**How do you think UNMC prepared you for your career?**

“Now that I have multiple students throughout my region, I have noticed how well UNMC’s clinical rotation schedule works. Especially noting the 1-day clinicals within our first year. I wish all schools offered that. I also love the amount of interprofessional experience we receive throughout our 3 years. The setting I’m currently in requires communication with nurses, doctors, other therapy disciplines, PAs, NPs, family members, marketers, billing departments, etc. Being able to communicate effectively with all these individuals would be a hurdle without the experience I had at UNMC.”

**What does this mean to you and for your career?**

“I am forever grateful for the relationships I created at UNMC. Not just with my fellow classmates but with other students and faculty. I truly believe UNMC not only prepares us to clinically care of our patients but also on how to build relationships with our patients and other individuals involved in patient care. We are much more well-rounded therapists, focusing on the patient as a whole, not just their limitations. You’ll never get to use your clinical skills if the patient is not willing to work with you.”

**Do you have any advice for others?**

“There are so many different opportunities to utilize our skills following graduation. Do not be scared to try them all! The therapy world is so diverse and always changing. Be ready and willing to be adapt.”

**Do you have a favorite memory of your time at UNMC?**

“Getting tacos at Pauli’s with my classmates after big anatomy exams (haha). Pauli’s is no longer right there but, man, was it a fantastic spot to unwind after a stressful week of studying.”

**ALUMNI** – *If you or a fellow alumnus has an interesting story to tell, please let us know at [pteducation@unmc.edu](mailto:pteducation@unmc.edu). It may be featured in a future newsletter!*



## Curt Krobot, PT, DPT, OCS

Curt Krobot, PT, DPT, OCS graduated from the UNMC Physical Therapy Program in 2010. Since graduating, he has worked in the Omaha area. Dr. Krobot opened his own clinic, Kinetic Physical Therapy, on November 1, 2023. It is located at 11922 I Street, in the Sports Plaza on 120th and I Street.

### What type of patients do you see at your clinic?

“Kinetic Physical Therapy serves a variety of patients including joint pain, back and neck pain, post-surgical rehab, sports rehab, Vestibular rehab, and scoliosis. I obtained my Orthopedic Clinical Specialist (OCS) certification in 2014, which identifies Physical Therapists with additional training and expertise in Orthopedic injuries and rehab. I am also certified for Running injury diagnosis and recovery, as well as Golf injury diagnosis and rehab with Titleist Performance Institute (TPI).”

### What made you decide to open your own clinic?

“I started my own physical therapy clinic because I wanted a place where I could provide high quality personal care. I think to achieve the best results, you need consistent hands-on treatment, and that is what I provide. Treatment is one on one, and patients are given an appropriate amount of time, not rushed through. I am passionate about helping people recover from injuries and I believe that everyone

deserves to live a full and active life. I am committed to providing my patients with the best possible care. My clinic is a warm and welcoming environment where my patients can feel comfortable and supported during their recovery. I am proud to be a part of the Physical Therapy community and I am excited to continue to serve my patients and my community.”



*Curt Krobot, PT, DPT, OCS with his wife, Jennifer, and kids Miles and Sloane in November, 2023.*

## Administrative Staff Highlights

### Department Operations Manager attends Nebraska Career Catalyst



*Marcela Williams, BHM*

On November 13, 2023, Marcela Williams, BHM attended the inaugural Nebraska Career Catalyst conference. The event was supported by Omaha Steaks. Its purpose was to create networking opportunities and collaboration between alumni associations at all four of the University of Nebraska locations. Alumni from

UNK, UNL, UNO, and UNMC and University of Nebraska employees were welcome to attend.

“This was a great opportunity for me to enhance my networking experience and meet other mid-career managers and professionals. Some keynote speakers were Nebraska alumni who shared their stories of success and how their education at Nebraska helped them get to where they are today. I was able to connect with a couple of these individuals on LinkedIn and enjoy their posts about business ownership and managing a team.

“The breakout sessions were so informative! There were many topics to choose from and the speakers who presented had great knowledge. A lot of the information I received at this event can be used in my responsibilities with students and faculty in the program. I look forward to attending regularly to this event and continue to foster those relationships.”

— Marcela Williams, BHM



*Pictured (l-r): Dr. Mu Rod Jafarov, Head of the Department of the International Cooperation, TMA; Dr. Joseph Siu, director of GHOP, UNMC; Dr. Rustam Turakulov, Head of the Department of Education Quality Control, TMA; Dr. Hannah Tong, Office of Global Engagement, UNMC*

### Global Health Opportunities Program Updates

On February 27, 2024, Dr. Joseph Siu, director of the Global Health Opportunities Program (GHOP), met with the delegation visiting UNMC from Tashkent Medical Academy (TMA) in Uzbekistan. The delegation came to sign an institutional agreement to collaborate with educational programs at UNMC. Physical Therapy was identified as one of their areas of interest.

In the meeting, the group discussed potential collaborations including a PT summer program and a visiting scholar opportunity. The head of the Department of the International Cooperation, Dr. Jafarov, was very interested in learning about DPT education in the United States. He stated that rehabilitation is an emerging field of

clinical practice in Uzbekistan. Their institution is opening a rehabilitation center and is looking for collaborations to enhance their clinical practice. A collaboration with UNMC's PT program would help educate more therapists for the center.

---

Dr. Siu traveled to Taiwan in March. The purpose of his trip was to meet with prospective GHOP students and students enrolled in this year's Summer Experiential Education Program (SEED) program; sign a new Memorandum of Understanding with our newest collaborator, National Yan-Ming Chiao-Tung University, in Taiwan; and further discussions regarding the dual Master's program with Chang Gung University.



## New MMI Department of Physical Therapy Director visits the PT program



Susan Reilly, PT, MS, DPT, PCS

On April 1, 2024, the Physical Therapy Program hosted the new Director of the Department of Physical Therapy at the UNMC Munroe Meyer Institute (MMI), Susan Reilly, PT, MS, DPT, PCS.

The morning began with a DPT Program faculty meeting, during which Dr. Reilly introduced herself and shared her role at MMI. Subsequently, Physical Therapy faculty and staff members introduced themselves, extending a warm welcome.

Following the introductions, Dr. Becker took Dr. Reilly on a comprehensive tour of various facilities for education and research. The tour included visits to the Wellness Innovation Space (WIN) and Clinical Movement Analysis Lab, and the educational Physical Therapy labs in Bennett Hall and the Student Life Center. Dr. Reilly was briefed on the classroom spaces

equipped with technology for distance education, emphasizing the commitment to providing high-quality education to and from the Kearney campus.

Special attention was given to the iEXCEL space and the iWall, which serve as a venue for presentations aimed at prospective students and special activities for student learning (e.g. simulation). We discussed the significance of practical learning experiences.

During lunch, Dr. Reilly, the Associate Program Director, Sara Bills, and Dr. Becker engaged in discussions concerning the Omaha area, particularly to facilitate Dr. Reilly's transition. The conversation also delved into career progression opportunities for MMI clinicians, including the potential to transition into clinical faculty roles. Interdepartmental collaboration and curriculum goals were addressed, underscoring the importance of ongoing engagement and collaboration in educational initiatives.

Dr. Reilly states, "Since I arrived at the Munroe-Meyer Institute at UNMC in mid-January, I have been so impressed with the depth of experience of the therapists whom I am getting to know. We have wonderful resources here and, in the future, I look forward to being able to utilize those resources to expand the services we offer here at Munroe-Meyer. I also would like to seek out collaborations with others that will enable us to better serve all Nebraskans, whether through continuing education courses, clinical programs, community outreach or research projects."

---

### COVER STORY: The Class of 2024 becomes the 20th DPT graduating class *continued*

The class of 1992 consisted of 28 individuals who became the first to complete the new three-year program and receive a MPT degree. Along with the new curriculum, the MPT program allowed for expanding the size of classes over the first 3 years of its implementation to 40 members per class.

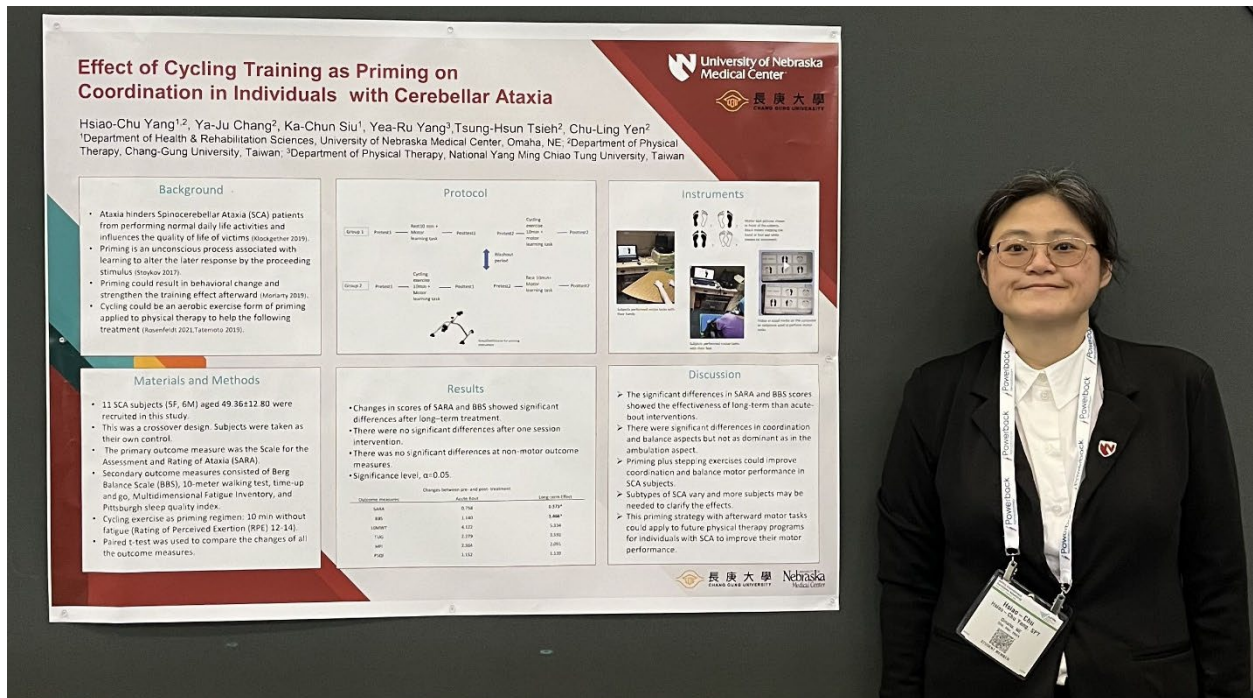
In the 1990's a national dialogue began regarding a transition to the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) as the entry-level professional degree. The University of Nebraska became one of the first public institutions in the nation to offer the DPT as the entry-level degree for physical therapists when it implemented the new

curriculum in the fall of 2001. The class of 2004 was the first to receive the entry-level DPT degree, ***making this year's graduating class the 20th class to receive the DPT degree.***

In 2008, the PT program increased the class size to 50 students. And in 2016, as part of a state-wide initiative for improving healthcare in rural areas, the Health Sciences Education building opened on the University of Nebraska at Kearney campus. The DPT program expanded to include sixteen students at that location. The first cohort graduated in 2019.

For more information about the history of the program, please click [here](#).

## Program Updates



Ruth Yang, SPT pictured with her poster at APTA CSM in February 2024

### UNMC participation in APTA CSM 2024

The annual American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting was held February 15-17, 2024, in Boston, MA. The UNMC Physical Therapy Education Program's participation is as follows:

#### PODIUM PRESENTATIONS

The Relationship between Clinical and Laboratory Measures of Quadriceps Strength after ACL Reconstruction | Dave Werner, PT, DPT, OCS, CSCS\*\*

Early Functional Performance Is Associated with Later Quadriceps Strength after Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction | Alyx Jorgensen, PT, DPT\*\*

#### POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Designing Effective E-learning Modules: Exploring Best Practices in Module Navigation. | Christensen S, Pohlmann L, Lyden E, Beam B, Langel S.

Effect of Cycling Training as Priming on Coordination in Individuals with Cerebellar Ataxia | Yang H-C, Chang Y-J, Siu KC, Hsieh T-H, Yen C-L.

Feasibility of Using Mobile Application to Self-monitor Physical Health Status in Patients with Parkinson's Disease in Rural Nebraska: A Case Series | Yao Z, Yang H-C, Gonzales K, Toh C, Leon M, Siu KC.

Utilization Rates of Patient-Reported Outcome Measures in Outpatient Physical Therapy: An Exploratory Retrospective Pilot Study | Zhu, D, Frazee M, Rosenthal M, Siu KC.

\*\*graduate research assistant

### Introducing the Michele Thorman Scholarship for Perseverance and Professionalism

The UNMC Physical Therapy Education Program is honored to introduce the Michele Thorman Scholarship for Perseverance and Professionalism, aimed at recognizing and supporting an exceptional Physical Therapy student. This scholarship is designed for a second-year PT student who has demonstrated remarkable perseverance in overcoming adversity. Several examples of this include:

exhibiting an unwavering commitment to obtaining satisfactory grades despite obstacles; and successfully navigating the demands of the PT Program while triumphing over personal challenges (health, family or other adversities).

In addition to perseverance, a spotlight will be placed on candidates who have been acknowledged by academic and clinical faculty



## Michele Thorman Scholarship *continued*

for their outstanding professional behaviors and character. These include a strong sense of professional and personal accountability, integrity, humility, exceptional commitment to learning, respectful communication with peers, patients, and faculty, as well as a deep-seated value for selfless service to their community and/or the physical therapy profession.

The Michelle Thorman Scholarship for Perseverance and Professionalism is not just an investment in education; it's a celebration of resilience, character, and a commitment to excellence. The inaugural recipient of this scholarship will be selected in 2024. Individuals are invited to apply and share their inspiring stories that exemplify the true spirit of determination and professionalism.

This scholarship is made possible through the generosity of Michele Thorman, PT, DPT, MBA, a 1978 UNMC Physical Therapy alumnus. Subsequent to earning her Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy at UNMC, Michele earned an MBA from Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, WI (1992), and in 2006, she earned a Clinical Doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT) from Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. Dr. Thorman is committed to making a lasting impact through supporting an aspiring physical therapist. Dr. Thorman states, "Little did I know when I graduated from the UNMC PT Program what a rich and gratifying career was ahead of me. It all started with an exceedingly committed faculty and my beloved Class of 1978 classmates. I came to deeply appreciate the investment these early professional mentors made in me. Now, it is my humbling privilege to

"pay it forward" and contribute to the futures of worthy UNMC PT students. My sincere thanks to the outstanding UNMC faculty, administration and students. I wish you continued success today and long into your futures!"

Physical Therapy Education Program Director Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD, shares, "This scholarship is a bright spot in education, helping a student achieve their goal of becoming a physical therapist. Thank you, Dr. Thorman, for making a real difference."



*Michele Thorman, PT, DPT, MBA*

## Scholarly Activity

### Dr. Wellsandt leads UNMC branch of KArAT trial

Total knee replacement (TKR) is used widely to alleviate pain and improve function for people with advanced knee osteoarthritis. Almost 800,000 TKRs are performed annually in the U.S., and most individuals report satisfaction with the procedure and improvements in pain and function. However, most TKR recipients do not increase their physical activity levels post-surgery, even as pain and function improve.

As greater physical activity can lead to further decreases in pain, lower risk of common chronic diseases, and an improvement in quality of life, it is critical to find ways to help TKR recipients become more active post-surgery. KArAT (**K**nee **A**rthroplasty **A**ctivity **T**rial) will assess whether personalized guidance from a health

coach coupled with financial rewards can effectively increase physical activity post-TKR. KArAT is led by Elena Losina, Ph.D., MSc, at Brigham and Women's Hospital, alongside a team of investigators from Mass General Brigham, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Northwestern University, the University at Buffalo, and the University of Kansas. Dr. Elizabeth Wellsandt is the lead of the UNMC site in collaboration with surgeons in the UNMC Department of Orthopaedic Surgery. The study is funded by the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. Enrollment began during Spring 2023.

For further information, please see the NIH grant abstract [here](#).

*Physical Therapy Program faculty are actively disseminating research and scholarly work on a variety of topics. Below is a list of publications, presentations and grants since the last Joint Connections newsletter in September 2023. Names in bold are faculty members in the Physical Therapy Program.*

## Publications

**Bills S**, Skrzat J, Tevald MA. Application of the 4-element movement model to cardiovascular and pulmonary physical therapy practice. *Cardiopulmonary Physical Therapy Journal*. Published online February 27, 2024. doi:10.1097/cpt.0000000000000246

Davies BL, Hoffman RM, Reelfs H, **Volkman KG**, Kurz MJ. (2024). Individuals with multiple sclerosis exhibit more regular center of mass accelerations after physical therapy. *Archives of Rehabilitation Research and Clinical Translation*, in press.

Slepian RC, Vincent AC, Patterson H, Slepian MJ, **Siu KC**. (2024) Cell phone-based health systems for remote access - Evolution, capabilities, applications, and impact for precision medicine and beyond. In: Ramos, Kenneth S. (eds.) *Comprehensive Precision Medicine*, vol. [1], pp. 570-584. UK: Elsevier.

**Wellsandt E**. 2024 Bart Mann Award for the Advancement of Sports Medicine Research. American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine. \*Recognizes clinical perspective and expertise provided to NIH study sections

Werner D, Jorgensen A, Post A, Weaver B, Tao M, Wichman CS, **Wellsandt E**. Short-Term Fear of Movement Improves Less After Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction with Concomitant Meniscus Repair. *Phys Ther Sport*. 2024;65:102-106.

---

## Presentations

**Becker BJ**. Combined Board Chairs and Administrator Deliberations Decision-Making Process. Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy. Annual Meeting, Jacksonville, FL 10/19/23 – 10/20/23.

**Becker BJ**. Jurisdiction Board Chair Forum of Special Interest Topics. Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy. Annual Meeting, Jacksonville, FL 10/19/23 – 10/20/23.

**Becker BJ, Volkman K, Wells T, Sleddens N, Cochran T**. Does implementation of a lifestyle medicine curriculum affect student wellness during doctor of physical therapy education? Poster presentation, American College of Lifestyle Medicine Annual Meeting, Denver, CO, October 29-November 1, 2023. [https://digitalcommons.unmc.edu/cahp\\_pt\\_pres/41/](https://digitalcommons.unmc.edu/cahp_pt_pres/41/)

**Becker BJ**. Funaki J, Nolan J. Passport to Practice: Decoding Credentialing in Physical Therapy. Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy. Annual Meeting, Jacksonville, FL 10/19/23 – 10/20/23.

**Christensen S.**, Dial M. From Textbooks to Clinical Practice: Selecting and Implementing Outcome Measures in Stroke Rehabilitation. Peer Reviewed Presentation. APTA NE State Meeting. Omaha, NE 4.6.2024

Fuentes Rivera L, Failla M, Tao M, **Wellsandt E**. Functional Outcomes Across Communities and Neighborhoods After ACL Reconstruction - Poster Presentation. American Physical Therapy Association, Combined Sections Meeting; Boston, MA. 2024 Feb.

Jensen L, **Cochran T, Volkman K**, McKelvey M, Kennel V, Klein A. Promoting participation: using tele-teams to empower rural stroke survivors. Oral Symposium, American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM) National Conference, Atlanta, GA, November 2, 2023.

**Johnson GC**. Anatomy of the Physical Therapy Program at UNMC. UNMC, Masters in Medical Anatomy Professional Seminar Series, December 2023.

**Johnson G, Gossman K, Wells T, Becker BJ**. Exploring the Interplay Between Physical Activity Wellness, Social Networks, and Academic Performance in PT Students. APTA-Nebraska Annual Meeting April 6, 2024. [https://digitalcommons.unmc.edu/cahp\\_pt\\_pres/43/](https://digitalcommons.unmc.edu/cahp_pt_pres/43/)

Jorgensen A, Werner D, Tao M, **Wellsandt E**. Early Functional Performance Is Associated With Later Quadriceps Strength After Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction - Oral Presentation. American Physical Therapy Association, Combined Sections Meeting; Boston, MA. 2024 Feb DW & AJ: PhD Students; LFR: Sports Med Research Fellow; MM: Research Technologist

Kennel VK, **Venema DM**. "CAPTURE Falls Virtual Educational Series - Session 1: Interprofessional Approaches to Reducing Fall Risk and Defining a Fall." Virtual oral presentation for the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant. February 21, 2024.

Kennel VK, **Venema DM**. "Move Your Mobility Program Forward Using Organizational Science." 6th Annual Altholz Mobility Conference, Northwestern Medicine. September 30, 2023.



## Presentations *continued*

Kennel, VK, **Venema DM**. CATCH RURAL Falls – A Fall Risk Management Program for Rural Health Clinics. Nebraska Hospital Association’s Critical Access Hospitals and Rural Health Clinics Conference on Quality; Kearney, NE; November 9, 2023.

**Venema DM**, Kennel VK. “CAPTURE Falls Virtual Educational Series - Session 2: Fall Risk Assessment.” Virtual oral presentation for the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant. March 20, 2024.

**Venema DM**, Kennel VK. “CAPTURE Falls Virtual Educational Series - Session 3: Fall Risk Reduction Interventions.” Virtual oral presentation for the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant. April 17, 2024.

Weldon N, McManigal M, Mormino S, Hemmingsen T, Wichman C, Smith A, Tao M, Manzer M, **Wellsandt E**. Validating a Clinical Knee Effusion Grading Scale to MRI Volumetric Assessment in Athletes After ACLR - Oral Presentation. American Physical Therapy Association, Combined Sections Meeting; Boston, MA. 2024 Feb

Werner D, Fuentes-Rivera L, Jorgensen A, McManigal M, Tao M, **Wellsandt E**. The Relationship Between Clinical and Laboratory Measures of Quadriceps Strength After ACL Reconstruction - Oral Presentation. American Physical Therapy Association, Combined Sections Meeting; Boston, MA. 2024 Feb.

Yang H-C, Chang Y-J, **Siu KC**, Hsieh T-H, Yen C-L. Effect of Cycling Training as Priming on Coordination in Individuals with Cerebellar Ataxia. Combined Sections Meeting of the APTA. Boston, MA, February 2024.

Yao Z, Yang H-C, Gonzales K, Toh C, Leon M, **Siu KC**. Feasibility of Using Mobile Application to Self-monitor Physical Health Status in Patients with Parkinson’s Disease in Rural Nebraska: A Case Series. Combined Sections Meeting of the APTA. Boston, MA, February 2024.

Zhu D, **Frazee M**, **Rosenthal M**, **Siu KC**. Utilization Rates of Patient-Reported Outcome Measures in Outpatient Physical Therapy: An Exploratory Retrospective Pilot Study. Combined Sections Meeting of the APTA. Boston, MA, February 2024.

---

## Grants

*PI: Primary Investigator*

*Co-PI: Co-Primary Investigator*

*Co-I: Co-Investigator*

Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD, CLT-LANA (PI)

Funding Source: United Healthcare Services of the Midlands

Title: Nebraska Medicaid PT, OT, SLP Claims Review Project

Dates: January 2024 – July 2024

Joseph Siu, PhD (Co-I)

Funding Source: NIOSH CS-CASH Center Research Grant

Title: Evaluating the Safety of Agricultural Machinery Ingress/Egress for Aging Producers

Dates: 2023-2027

Joseph Siu, PhD (Co-I)

Funding Source: U.S. Economic Development Administrations

Title: Omaha Virtual Reality (VR) Pipeline: Developing VR technology/programs for medical education

Dates: 2024-2027

Joseph Siu, PhD (PI)

Funding Source: GP IDeA-CTR 2024 Community-Engaged Research Capacity Development Award.

Title: Building Community-Engaged Capacity to advance Telerehabilitation Services for Patients with Chronic Disease and/or Disability

Dates: 2024-2025

Dawn Venema, PhD (PI)

Funding Source: Iowa Department of Health and Human Services

Title: CAPTURE Falls Virtual Education Series: 6-month webinar series to Iowa Critical Access Hospitals.

Dates: 1/1/2024 – 8/31/2024

## Announcements

**100% of the faculty and students** in the UNMC Physical Therapy Program are APTA members!

---

**Want to share a job opening with students?** Please email [ptclined@unmc.edu](mailto:ptclined@unmc.edu) with details!

---

**Giving Day Summary:** SUN-APTA contributed \$1000 to the Physical Therapy Education Fund for Excellence as part of Giving Day 2024. This included a \$750 donation, plus an additional \$250 Giving Day challenge, which was 'unlocked' by 10 donors. Additionally, two other \$250 Giving Day challenges were met. Overall, 26 donors contributed to the 2024 event, which took place over 24 hours on March 26th and 27th.

The Physical Therapy Education Fund for Excellence benefits and supports areas of greatest need within the Physical Therapy Program.

Thank you to all who participated! For anyone who missed the opportunity to participate in Giving Day but would still like to donate, please do so here: <https://www.greatergoodgivingday.org/campaigns/physical-therapy-education-fund-for-excellence>

---

**For more information** about the College of Allied Health Professions and the Physical Therapy Program, see the CAHP Biennial report [here](#).

**Joint Connections Contributors:** Sara E. Bills, PT, DPT, GCS | Jessica Braun, SPT | Cassie Collins, SPT | Megan Frazee, PT, DPT, OCS, MTC, FAAOMPT | Patricia A. Hageman, PT, PhD, FAPTA | Fran Higgins, MA, ADWR | Joseph K. Siu, PhD | Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD, OCS

**Joint Connections Editors:** Marcela Williams, BHM | Kerissa Robison, BA | Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD