



**TITLE** Leadership Practices in Year One Students Enrolled in Professional Entry-Level Doctor of Physical Therapy Programs

**RESEARCHER** Laura M. Lovasco  
Oakland University (Michigan)  
Unpublished doctoral dissertation: July 2013

**OBJECTIVE** The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership practices of students entering the physical therapy profession at the doctoral level.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The sample involved 199 students in the first semester of the first year of a professional entry-level DPT program enrolled in six Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) accredited Midwestern universities (response rate = 76.2%). Each completed the Leadership Practices Inventory and provided demographic information. The typical student was 23 years old, female (67.7%), Caucasian (86.5%), and 64 percent were APTA members.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

The most frequently used leadership practice was Enable, followed by Encourage, Model, Challenge, and Inspire with mean scores falling between “fairly often” (7) and “usually” (8). Age accounted for between three and six percent of the variance around each leadership practice using regression analyses. Neither ethnicity nor university affiliation accounted for any significant amounts of variance around any of the five leadership practices. T-tests for each leadership practice by gender were not statistically significant.

The author suggests: “By providing activities that facilitate the development of all leadership practices, faculty can further develop students as leaders in the profession. These types of activities would be especially beneficial for the Challenge and Inspire leadership practices which were ranked lower in the YR1 DPT students” (p. 24). In addition:

...the Self LPI can be a useful tool for advising students. Most faculty in entry-level DPT programs meet with students on an annual basis for

academic advising and discussion about professional development using the APTA core values and the generic abilities. The Self LPI is a quick and simple tool that could be used to measure leadership practices each year the student matriculates through the DPT program. The faculty could advise the DPT student on individualized leadership development during didactic and clinical education courses to make the student more aware of how leadership practices could shape the student's career. Aggregate data from students could be collected for faculty to discuss mechanisms for curriculum enhancement for the identified leadership needs to use as threads throughout the entry-level DPT curriculum" (pp. 24-25).