



Testimonials: Pursuit of Geriatric Specialist Certification

The Section on Geriatrics would like to thank all of the specialists who offered a testimonial on the many reasons to pursue becoming a Geriatric Certified Specialist (GCS). Below is just a sampling of the responses that were received.

For more information about the GCS exam, visit www.geriaticspt.org.

The community and physicians recognize the advanced level of practice of a certified specialist. I have also gained the respect of therapists by practicing at the specialist level. If we really want our profession to advance, we need to move forward with advanced learning.

Jill Heitzman, PT, DPT, GCS, FCCWS
Ames, IA

Being a GCS helped me look at the "bigger picture," or the "whole package" so to speak. I have a better understanding of the psycho emotional aspect of illness and can better motivate my clients to work harder in therapy. Since becoming a GCS, I do make more recommendations for medical exam, or labs, etc. understanding that important information from assessment by other professionals impact this whole package, and my own assessment of the patient, treatment planning and the successful rehabilitation of my clients. I am a proponent of continuously seeking knowledge, about the clientele we serve, and our practice. I have also been very generous to share that knowledge with my patients, staff and other healthcare providers I work with.

Maria Dulce Carunungan, PT, DPT, GCS, CWS
Beckley, WV

Certification is proof of an advanced base of knowledge. The test does assess your hands-on skills, albeit on a "paper and pencil" test. In a hiring position, I would hire a board certified therapist above all other qualifications! That defines quality and expertise!

Bill Staples, PT, DPT, GCS
Carmel, IN

As a newly certified geriatric specialist, I can say that most patients appreciate therapists who are actively pursuing excellence in the field of physical therapy. Most colleagues respect the accomplishment and achievement of passing the exam.

Jason Musni, PT, DPT, GCS
Independence, OH

I believe that persons who have earned the status of GCS offer a perspective of rehabilitation, fitness and wellness for the older adult that goes way beyond the "hands-on skills" we all develop in daily practice. In preparing for the GCS you will be challenged to expand your knowledge and apply your understanding of the physiologic complexities of aging and morbidity and how these issues should influence recommendations for medical management (i.e. medications, surgery, etc.) as well as rehabilitation and wellness (i.e. nutrition, relaxation, sleep, exercise, etc). I believe that most Geriatric Clinical Specialists not only practice direct patient/client care that reflects advanced clinical decision-making skills, they also offer much needed expertise and consultation to interested parties, such as hospital/rehab/LTC administrators, government agencies, and community groups/facilities. Although many highly skilled therapists who work with older adults may choose not to seek a specialty certification, I believe our profession needs physical therapists who are willing to develop expert "hands-on" skills and develop expertise and skills for consultation and management of the complex medical, rehabilitation, and wellness issues of older adults.

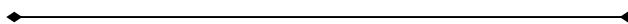
Ellen Zambo Anderson, PT, MA, GCS
Westfield, NJ

Surround yourself with mentors; they will coach you and mold you in your professional development.

Jonathan Cruz, PT, GCS, GTC
Newton, NJ

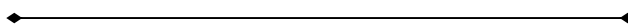
We all need to value the specialist certification as employers and colleagues. When searching for a therapist, use the APTA specialist directory. When interviewing a candidate, value the specialization. This indicates not only a level of clinical skill - but also an attempt to better oneself.

Mike Studer, PT, MHS, NCS
Salem, OR



The best thing that has occurred since taking the exam is the admiring and positive comments from other staff therapists. Your initiative will encourage other PTs around you to also seek excellence! Supervisors should support as many staff as possible to seek certification, as they can then market the facility and/or department as having among its ranks Board Certified Specialists in Geriatric Physical Therapy!

Lisa Butler, PT, DPT, GCS
Lincoln, NE



In my present position as a supervisor in an ECF, I am truly recognized as an important member of the interdisciplinary team and I am frequently consulted by other disciplines. Knowledge is always a good thing!!!

Donna Schnatz PT, GCS
Pitman Manor, NJ