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PTA 2850

National Practice Exam Reflection

As part of my PTA 2850 class we were assigned to take one of the free national exam practice tests. It was a great opportunity to get a feel for what we will be responsible for as we are getting closer to graduation and licensing. A couple of the benefits of taking the test half way through the PTA program is being able to see where our strengths and weaknesses are and what our plans are to assure that we pass our national test.

I was not really sure how to feel about taking the practice test as early as we did. I still felt like there is so much that I didn’t and still don’t know. We still had half of our second semester left. We have not taken our neurology class and have only worked at the onsite clinic a hand full of times. Even though I was not ready for it, I was grateful to be able to get a preview of what the test will entail in regards to types and difficulty of questions. It was also good to get a feel for the length of the test and if I would have enough time to spend an adequate amount of time answering each question.

It was interesting to hear other classmate’s responses to the results and process of the test. I felt there were a lot of mixed feelings both good and bad. I feel that this was a good experience. I think that it gave me a great understanding of what is expected of me for the rest of the program going forward. I ended up getting an overall score of just above 70 percent. Which compared to the average score of all other participants was 10 percent points higher. However, for me it is still hard to see a test score for myself in the 70’s (I am pretty hard on myself and hold myself to higher standards than that).

I really liked how the test gives you a complete performance analysis of the test. This allowed me to see not only my overall score but how well I did with system specific questions and under which subject contents I was more proficient in compared to other subjects. I think that the test correctly appropriated what areas I need to be working on studying going forward.

In regard to the system specific analysis, I found out that I was strongest with questions regarding the musculoskeletal, neuromuscular and nervous system. My weakest area was non-systems questions (oddly enough the NPTA exam app I have on my phone indicates the same). In the content areas, I do really well with the data collection areas however I showed much lower scores in my knowledge of Equipment, devices and technologies along with therapeutic modalities. Overall, I felt this was pretty representative of how I feel in the program. I feel like there are people in my class that have had the opportunity to work in a PT clinic and have been around the use of the different modalities used in therapy along with all the other devices and may more knowledgeable in that area than I am. I’m not sure if it was me not knowing the information well, or if it was more how the questions were asked. I tried doing what the book suggested when working on eliminating obviously wrong answers to narrow the choices, however I ended up not knowing what to choose.

Going forward with the next couple of practice exams and studying for the actual national exam there are a couple of things I’ll probably do differently when taking the tests. For one, I ended up taking the test quite late at night. I felt like I was just rushing some of my answers because I wanted to get a reasonable amount of sleep. I think that I would also make sure that I am taking it in a place where I won’t have interruptions. There were a few times that my kids would wake up and interrupt me and I would have to take care of what they needed. I think the most beneficial part of being able to take the practice exams is being able to see what changes I need to make in my studying. I get to now go back through the test and see which answers I got wrong, I can see study the rational for why the answer I missed is correct. I get to see which contents I need to focus the majority of my studying in. I apparently need more help with understanding therapeutic modalities and devices. Now I can focus on those questions and work on getting those types of answers correct in the future. Being able to take the test so early is also a great opportunity. I feel as if taking the test only weeks before the national exam would cause me more anxiety trying to feel only a couple of days with too much information and I would let it get the best of me.

I look forward to being able to go through each question individually and finding out if I will improve drastically. I would love to get to the point where I have no doubt about passing the national exam and becoming a certified Physical Therapist Assistant.

*Or were you thrown off by types and styles and questions?*

*Overall, what did you learn from taking this exam? What will be your plan to study for the NPTAE?*

 Send a well-written reflection of your experience including things you learned, what you would do differently, and your plan regarding preparation for the NPTAE.  Paper length: 3-5 paragraphs, see rubric