

1-1-2008

You Can Be Me!

Tamara Gravano

Marshall University, Gravano@marshall.edu

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Recommended Citation

Gravano, T., You can be me!, For Your Health, 2008, p. 11

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Can Be Me!

helping people stay healthy

Physical therapists (PTs) are health care providers who are experts in the examination and treatment of health conditions that affect people's abilities to move and function. Physical therapist assistants (PTAs) work under the direction and supervision of a PT. PTs and PTAs work with patients and clients from newborns to elders—in all types of settings, from hospitals (even critically ill patients in the intensive care unit) and outpatient clinics to the home, the community, schools, and the workplace. All physical therapist education programs graduate students with a degree that is higher than a bachelor's, and most programs award the clinical doctorate (DPT) in physical therapy. Also, all PTs must pass a national examination and be licensed by the state in which they practice. PTAs must complete a two-year education program, usually offered through a community or junior college. To find out more about becoming a PT or a PTA, go to www.beapt.org.



TAMARA GRAVANO, PT, DPT, GCS, had her first internship while working on her graduate degree in the field of geriatrics (the specialty of working with older patients). “I was thinking sports at first. So I wasn’t sure how I’d feel about working with a group of patients who had an average age of 79. But I was immediately at home with my many ‘grandmas and grandpas.’ I loved it.”

Gravano has specialized in the field of geriatrics ever since. “I enjoy talking with someone who has a greater sense of history than I do. My patients remember seeing the first car come down the street. They have a great depth of human experience and they make great conversation,” she says.

“At the end of the day, I love that I helped someone who has had a stroke get up and be independent again when they never thought that would be possible,” explains Gravano. “That is a great day for me. The gratitude in their faces makes me melt.”

For students who want to consider a field in physical therapy, Gravano advises “pay attention in science class. Biology is very important. And be inquisitive. That makes for a good physical therapist.” Gravano also encourages young people to consider a field in geriatrics. “With the aging of the population, there are more and more people over the age of 65. There is so much opportunity to help keep them healthy and independent. They are amazing patients.”

helping grateful patients