

R-E-S-P-E-C-T Find Out What It Means To SLP!

Introduction: Erika McLean graduated from Abilene Christian University in Abilene, TX in 2016. She worked in inpatient rehab as an SLP and therapy lead until starting her own mobile FEES company in 2018 in Abilene and throughout West TX.

SLPs as the “red-headed step children of the rehab world”

- Why? Is some of this self-inflicted?
 - SLPs tend to document in separate areas.
 - Treating patients in their rooms.
 - SLP treatment primarily focuses on internal processes (ex. problem solving skills) as opposed to our PT/OT colleagues that have more of an extrinsic focus to treatment (ex. Walking, grip strength, etc.)
 - Difficult to physically visualize progress.
- How do we fix this stigma?
 - Building relationships with colleagues first and earning their respect (including clinical AND non-clinical staff).
 - Eirka’s advice: “The relationships and the evidence are what are going to propel you in your career, 100% sure of that.”
 - Show that you are a team player, but also do what is ethical and appropriate.
 - Designate yourself as an expert and put yourself in the position to be an educator as well.

- Education: inservices, lunch and learns, morning meetings.
 - FEES providers: Include multiple disciplines into your evaluation. Use this as an opportunity to demonstrate why their SLP needs access to this tool.
 - Be creative! Make your inservices specific to your audience, and demonstrate how following these recommendations could impact treatment/nursing care. Make your colleagues want to come to you in the future to seek out your advice.
- Evidence-Based Practice - Prove that we aren't just "winging it."

Importance of EBP:

- Being able to educate other members on your team about what our knowledge/skill set brings to the table.
- "They only know what they can see" – if we watch our patients eat and call it therapy, it makes other professionals wonder why they cannot just do that themselves; or when we complete a bedside swallow exam and modify diets until the patient stops coughing- this does not take the skill that we claim to have.

Advocating for the tools we need to provide the highest standard of care for our patients:

- This comes down to patient care and best practice- we would never expect a physician to provide care without the tools they need- why should we?
- Part of our field will always be advocating for our patients.

- Put yourself out there! Ties back to building relationships.
- Tailor your proposal to your audience-
 - For your administration, you may talk about logistics and numbers.
 - For your rehab directors, you talk about outcomes.
- Use research/case studies to support what you are advocating for.
- Don't take "no" as just a "no", take it as an opportunity for further education.

Tips for Applying/Interviewing:

- Ask about instrumentation access during the interview.
- Is there a designated treatment area for SLPs? If there is, ask to see it.
- New clinicians:
 - Just because a job listing may say "no CFYs" or "must have at least 3 years experience" call anyways and inquire about the specific job.
 - Advocate for yourself!

Final Thoughts:

- Build relationships!
- New clinicians- don't let your age hold you back from the things you want to do!
- Do not be intimidated!
- Step out of your comfort zone- this is where growth happens!!

REFERENCES:

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