

Opportunity Knocked, I Said Yes.

I was sitting with my supervisor at my first oncology rehab job - just 2 years out of school -- when she interrupted her own thought, turned to me, and asked, "Do you know how to 'make tweets'?" We both laughed. She volunteered her time with the APTA Oncology Section and they were looking for someone to "breathe life" into their social media.

I had more than a few hesitations. First and foremost, I prided myself on *not* being a social media addict -- I had to admit I actually *didn't* know how to "make tweets"! Second, and perhaps more importantly, the idea of getting involved with the APTA wasn't high on my list of priorities. Despite almost all my professors at Ithaca College (shout out, Bombers!) underscoring the importance of being an APTA member and seeking involvement in our professional organization... I never quite saw *the point*. Not to mention, here I was, 27-years-old, living in NYC... I was satisfied working my "9-5" and leaving work at work. Buuuut... there was something about this opportunity falling into my lap... and so I said I would help out.

Fast forward 6 years, I'm Secretary of APTA Oncology, and I will confidently say that saying yes to "making tweets" has been the best professional decision I've made so far in my career. Saying "yes" opened the door to a community and a network that I didn't know existed. All of a sudden I was on email chains and conference calls with names I only knew from journal articles! I was connected with a mentor -- an experienced clinician, researcher, and professor. That alone -- being connected with someone who holds positions that I aspire to someday -- has made such a difference. Mentorship came from numerous angles and has transformed into friendships, peer-collaborations, and even upward movement to my current position.

The professional network I've gained is only one of the perks. Perhaps most importantly, I feel like I have a seat at the table. Clinically, I've found the field I'm passionate about -- oncology rehabilitation. Being involved with APTA Oncology has allowed me to take part in conversations that are actually steering the future of this field! As one of the more recent graduates on the APTA Oncology Board of Directors (BOD), my perspective has been an important one as I can share what my experience was in school and how it has been entering the field. The BOD has listened and has supported initiatives, including, well... this Student and New Professional Subcommittee!

So, as with any good blog post, I'm going to end with a quick list of take homes:

1. When opportunity knocks, say YES.
2. When an opportunity *allows* you to go outside your comfort zone, embrace it.
3. Getting involved with APTA is so worthwhile and it pays to get in early!
 - a. Heck of a resume builder!
 - b. More mentorship than you'll know what to do with
 - c. One opportunity leads to another and then another... you just need to open the first door

APTA Oncology and the SNP Subcommittee is always looking for interested and motivated volunteers. Want to get involved or hear more about what my experience has been? Please reach out: sbwechsler1@gmail.com