



Finding Your Voice: Join us for the APTA Oncology Balance and Falls 2nd Annual Town Hall

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One day, I attended a webinar on the modified Total Neuropathy Score (mTNS) that happened to be the 1st annual town hall hosted by the APTA Oncology's Balance and Falls SIG. Soon after, I found myself as the new secretary of that SIG. How did that happen? Well, let's back up a little.

It seems many of the paths I found myself on as a physical therapist came with circumstance and choosing opportunities. When I first graduated from physical therapy school, I had completed my year-long clinicals in pediatrics in the outpatient and inpatient rehabilitation settings. Well, I accepted my first job at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, but in the one setting I hadn't been exposed to, acute care. It turns out this is where I discovered my interest in working with the oncology population. Working on the hematology, oncology, and bone marrow transplant units, I quickly found myself invested in these patients.

Fast forward 2 years later and I was moving to Chicago. At this point in time, I identified myself as a pediatric physical therapist, but I also have always been drawn to acute inpatient rehabilitation. The opening at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab was a split position between pediatrics and adults, and so I stuck my foot in that door and said, yes, I can see grown-ups too! Was it a learning curve? Absolutely, but I will say with certainty that I would not be the clinician I am today if I didn't go for something that didn't exactly fit my picture of where I thought I would be. As I adapted in my new role, I was then able to refocus on oncology rehabilitation and put my name in for our new allied health cancer committee.

Enter, the first annual APTA Oncology Balance and Falls SIG town hall meeting. I had been exposed to the pediatric mTNS, and a colleague had forwarded me the information that Meredith Wampler, co-creator of the mTNS, would be leading this education session. I logged on, listened, and asked my fair share of questions, then logged off. I joined the Balance and Falls SIG and their listserv that day, and soon after I had my name thrown in for secretary. From that one town hall, I've been able to be part of conversations with physical therapists that I only knew previously from journal articles. I've found an open community that wants to help one another and has the same fervor for oncology rehabilitation. As a note, I classify myself as an introvert, but I have learned that through finding these hidden opportunities, I too have a voice, and so do you. It starts with something as simple as using that voice to ask questions during a webinar.

The APTA Oncology's Balance and Falls Special Interest Group will be hosting our **2nd annual Town Hall on September 16, 2020** just preceding Falls Prevention Awareness Day, which is on September 22, 2020. Balance training is one of the foundations of our physical therapy knowledge bank, and that's why as physical therapists we can be such a great resource for our oncology patients, who have layers of additional fall risk factors compared to those without cancer. Sarah Kain, the SIG's Director of Membership and Communications, will be leading the discussion on falls, fall risk, balance, and education for cancer survivors, as well as delivering a community program for this population. We are encouraging everyone to treat this as a true town hall, opening the discussion to include all our oncology patients (from pediatrics to geriatrics of all diagnoses within oncology), as well as how our current environment with COVID-19 has and will impact our practice for this patient population.

So bring your questions, your insight, your enthusiasm, your voice, and join myself, the APTA Oncology Balance and Falls SIG, and your fellow physical therapists at the 2nd annual town hall! [Join us on Wednesday, September 16, 2020 at 8PM EST/7PM CT](#) to discuss ***Community Engagement: A Framework for Developing and Delivering an Educational Session and/or Group Balance Class to Individuals in Cancer Survivorship.***

If you have any additional questions or would like to find out more information about the APTA Oncology Balance and Falls SIG, please email oncbfsig@gmail.com.