



What Do a Toddler & Starting a Podcast Have in Common?

Elise Cantu, PT, DPT

What do a toddler & starting a podcast have in common? If you're thinking "what a strange question," we'll get back to the answer shortly. Just let it simmer for a bit.

I'm Elise K. Cantu, the voice behind TheOncoPT Podcast. In the podcast, we cover all things oncology physical therapy, one of my most favorite things ever. I didn't exactly set out to start a podcast, but too many pieces fell together to ignore it any longer. Let me explain:

With two oncology nurses in my family, cancer was a regular dinner conversation. But when my Granny & my godmother were diagnosed with breast cancer, I knew I wanted to be involved in cancer care somehow. During my first year of PT school, I went to APTA-CSM & my first oncology PT course - I was hooked. I knew after that first course that I was supposed to be an oncology physical therapist. I went back to CSM a couple years later, ready to start job hunting. I went straight to the Oncology Academy booth, excited to discuss job openings.

Now imagine my shock, when I was told "Oh, you want to work in oncology? You gotta go to New York." I'm a proud Fort Worth, Texan - no way was I going to New York. "No, no," I explained, "I'm from Texas." Still more disappointment: "well in that case, you have to go to Houston, MD Anderson."

Do not get me wrong: MD Anderson is amazing. But my people are in Fort Worth. These people are my neighbors, my friends, & I knew they were going to be my patients too. However, I was met with "no, there aren't any oncology PT jobs in Fort Worth," and I walked away from CSM heartbroken. How was I supposed to do what I was passionate about without moving far away from my community?

On the plane ride back, my mind was racing. That "no" answer simply wouldn't do. While I eventually found an oncology PT (or #OncoPT, as I like to call it) job in Fort Worth, I still couldn't drop those thoughts. I didn't want any other student or new PT pro to ever be told that they couldn't do what they wanted, especially when it came to



servicing people with cancer. Plus, why did we have to save all this amazing education about oncology PT for once a year at CSM? I wanted it, no, needed it year-round.

Is this starting to sound like a toddler who gets pouty when told “no”? Reflecting on it, that’s what it seems like, but I absolutely hate being told “no,” especially when I know people need help. So after months of brainstorming, I combined my love of oncology physical therapy & podcast listening, & took the plunge. In December 2018, TheOncoPT Podcast was born! I started researching topics, contacting potential guests, & interviewing everyone who said yes to coming on the podcast. It was tough some days to come home from a long day of work & work on the podcast late into the evening, but I’m really proud of how it has developed.

Fast forward to today, 2020: The podcast continues to grow, & I’m releasing my 100th episode on November 4th. I’ve interviewed physical therapists, nurses, advanced practitioners, patient advocates, & industry experts, & have learned a ton along the way. And best of all, learning from my guests has improved my patient care infinitely more than I could have imagined. Over the past 100 episodes, I’ve been inspired to earn my LANA (Lymphology Association of North America) certification and to sit for the Oncology Specialist Certification Exam. In the future, I will also do some advanced vestibular training & pelvic floor courses as well. At this point, I’m not ruling anything out - my guests have shown me there’s so much exciting stuff to learn!

While the podcast has taught me many things to implement in my practice, it’s also taught me how I **don’t** want to practice as an #OncoPT. As a new grad, I struggled to find the balance between delivering high quality patient care while still meeting corporate job expectations. This was probably the toughest lesson I learned during my first years as an oncology physical therapist. It wasn’t something I learned overnight - in fact, it took almost 2 years & a pandemic for me to know exactly how I want to serve people with cancer. But, my guests & patients along the way have shown me how much is truly possible in #OncoPT. Now I can clearly define how I will serve my patients to the best of my ability to help them achieve their goals. I confidently move forward into each day, not compromising my capacity to help the people I am called to serve.

A welcome surprise about the podcast is that it’s a great study tool for the Oncology Specialist Certification Exam. Yep, I’m talking about **that** Oncology Specialist Certification Exam. Several of my listeners have shared how helpful the podcast was for



APTA Oncology[™]
An Academy of the American
Physical Therapy Association

Student and New
Professional
Subcommittee

their exam prep, especially when their eyes needed a break from reading. Since I'm sitting for the exam in 2021, it's good to know I'm learning & sharing the right stuff!

So what's next for TheOncoPT Podcast? I've launched a couple #OncoPT courses, with another big project on the way (to be announced very, very soon!). I'm continuing my guest outreach, with more great interviews on the way. I like to have my fingers in lots of pies, so this next year will be a big one for TheOncoPT!

It's been a grand journey so far - but I feel that I'm just getting started. We have so much to learn about #OncoPT, & I can't wait to see what I learn next. Wherever you're starting, know that this is (in my biased opinion) the best area of physical therapy there is. The patients are amazing, the community is so supportive, & the support system you create here will carry you through so much, even a pandemic. I'm proud to be an #OncoPT, & I'm so excited you're joining us in this amazing profession!

Listen to the latest episode of TheOncoPT Podcast on Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Spotify, or on the website at TheOncoPT.com!

Elise K. Cantu, PT, DPT

"Helping you make the journey from novice physical therapist to competent, confident OncoPT"

@TheOncoPT

TheOncoPT@gmail.com