

*Original Research*

## The Use of Biophysical Agents in Physical Therapy Practice - a Survey of DPT Students in Clinical Education.

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**Purpose:** This study evaluates students' perspectives of the use of biophysical agents (BPAs) during their clinical education experiences. The purpose is to gain insight into the specific BPAs being routinely utilized in order to improve guidance for educational coverage in PT programs. Additionally, this study will examine relationships between use of BPAs with age, degree, years of practice, and region of the country of the clinical instructors.

**Methods:** This survey-based study investigated the use of biophysical agents, as reported by Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students throughout the United States. Surveys were distributed in 2021 using the Qualtrics survey tool (Qualtrics, Provo, UT), hosted by Baylor University. Invitations to complete the survey were emailed to the director/chairperson of 259 DPT programs in the United States with instructions to forward the survey to any current students who had been involved in, or completed any of their clinical education.

**Results:** Surveys from 481 DPT students revealed that the majority of clinical education sites (83.0%) were using BPAs, with roughly a quarter (27.4%) of students reporting that they felt pressured into using BPAs. There was a great deal of variability when breaking down the data based on clinical instructor (CI) demographics and clinical setting.

**Conclusions:** It is apparent that BPAs are still commonly used in physical therapy practice, and that in some instances DPT students feel pressured into using them. The information gathered in this study can provide guidance to DPT programs to assist them with aligning their curriculum with contemporary practice.

**Keywords:** biophysical agents, physical therapy, modalities

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