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Internship Mid-year Reflection

Before I began interning at Hanger Clinic, I had very little understanding of prosthetics. I was very uneducated about what exactly prosthetists do and all the circumstances under which amputations occur. For example, I didn't realize how many amputees were born without a limb, also known as a congenital amputation. Much of my knowledge came from seeing amputations on TV shows where they didn't go into much detail or show the reality of the prosthetics. As I began my internship, I began by learning about the basic different types of amputations and prosthetics that go along with them. For example, there are below-knee and above-knee amputations for legs, as well as prosthetic hands and elbows for upper extremities. There are many other types of smaller-level amputations, but these were the main ones I saw when I shadowed. Then I learned more about the parts of a prosthetic. For example, a prosthetic leg has a socket, which is custom to each person, an ankle, and a foot, additional support parts, and liners to go with it. It was extremely interesting to see these metal components substitute such a large part of one's body and do such a great job. The technology range was also very interesting to see. It was my first day when I learned that Bluetooth legs exist! The most interesting and educational part of my internship was the new knowledge I gained at every patient appointment I shadowed. I learned about prosthetic thumb options in one appointment and then cranial helmets for babies in another. This field has such a large range of specialties and roles that I feel like I've learned a little bit of everything during my shadowing experiences. In my internship, a lot of my time is

spent shadowing. This means I am not doing too many hands-on tasks. However, a few tasks I assist with in appointments range from helping take measurements to going and grabbing a needed tool. When I first started my internship, I didn't know where anything in the lab was. I now am able to identify different types of tools and their names, and where they are located. This helps me be able to quickly grab something when a clinician needs it. Also, I have gotten better at helping to take measurements. Usually, the clinician will measure the circumference of different parts of the limb starting from where the limb has been amputated. It took me a little to recognize that the pattern will always be by 2.5 inches. I can also navigate the computer program that clinicians use for patient information better, and I can input these measurements quickly. While these skills might seem like smaller tasks, being efficient and confident in them helps speed up a patient's appointment. When I started my internship, my main struggle was connecting with my mentor. After I had committed to interning at Hanger, she let me know that she doesn't see patients anymore as the manager, but she could still mentor me. While this was helpful, as she could still guide me, it meant that I would shadow other clinicians in the office for experience. This just made it a bit harder to connect with my mentor as we only saw each other regularly once a week. I also had to now choose for myself what clinician I wanted to shadow, which was nice to have the options but intimidating as I was choosing what type of learning environment I would be in for the day. There was no definite fix to this problem, I just had to adapt. I worked on forming bonds with the various clinicians I worked under, and I also scheduled a time to meet with Emily so that we could form a closer bond as well. Another challenge I faced was scheduling. Hanger Clinic was very flexible in when I could come in, which essentially meant I made my own schedule. When I started interning, I was in the midst of applying to colleges and playing a sport, which limited some of my time at my internship. I

helped myself with this by pre-making my internship schedule month by month, laying out what days I would come in and how long I would stay. This really helped me organize my schedule and ensure that I would reach my hour goal by the end of my internship. If anything, these challenges have helped me become more independent and resourceful as I learn how to solve my problems and adapt to new circumstances.

As I am now 4 months into my internship, I have made a few revelations about myself. The first is that I am very inexperienced in working with tools. Before starting my internship, I was unaware of how much hands-on work one does with the actual device. A lot of this work requires making adjustments with various wrenches, screwdrivers, and other tools. As I reflect on my skill set, I feel as though I am better at working hands-on with people instead of devices. I am not the craftiest, and as I see how much this aspect plays into a prosthetist's job on the day-to-day, I see it as being a challenge of the job. Additionally, I realized I am better at problem-solving than I thought. I often find myself brainstorming similar solutions when a clinician is talking about a problem they are facing with a patient. I've noticed that I naturally think of potential ideas to fix the issue, which is a good strength to identify when wanting to pursue this career. My goals have not changed very much since I made them. Any change I've noticed would be my intent in my monthly SMART goals. I began by trying to learn more about the basic knowledge of prosthetic devices and how they work, and now I am trying to learn more about education and the process of becoming one. My overarching SMART goal still remains. I want to achieve over 60 hours in my internship, and I feel as though I have learned all there is about the field of prosthetics and patient care. I haven't reached my hour goal yet, but I am on track with my current schedule and am confident that I will be able to complete it. I had some gaps in my schedule due to Hurricane Helene affecting the clinic's power and my own power,

taking a break during exams, and getting sick for a few weeks. Nonetheless, I have made up for this lost time and am very close to achieving my hour goal. Additionally, I am learning so much about the prosthetics field every time I go to my internship. Every visit, I see clinicians interacting with patients, and notice a new method of patient care, learn about a new prosthetic device, or even learn about different aspects of paperwork. I feel confident that I will reach over 60 hours, which can be proved by my signed time log, and I already feel confident that I gained in-depth knowledge about the overall field of prosthetics and what prosthetists do. To achieve my big SMART goal, I have made smaller SMART goals every month in my conferences. These range from learning about unusual amputations and prosthetic devices to working on my portfolio more. I have compiled proof for completing each of these smaller smart goals in my monthly conferences. My proof includes extra research, discussions in my daily journals, time logs, interviews, and more. My employability skills have also vastly improved. My citation skills have greatly improved. At the beginning of internship, I barely could cite a book, and now I know how to cite articles, videos, and interviews. My verbal communication skills have vastly improved from when I didn't know anyone on day one to where I am now comfortable talking with all the clinicians. I have also grown in this area as I talk to patients whenever I can. My creativity skills have also improved as I mentioned earlier. Problem-solving is a type of creativity, and this job is filled with finding creative solutions to problems. Being able to physically adjust a prosthetic device also opens up limitless creative possibilities because you can add, remove, or modify any part of it. I also am trying to be creative as I head into designing my portfolio website. My initiative skills have also grown as I am independently in charge of my schedule and who I shadow for the day. I take charge of how much effort I put into my internship hour-wise, and I know that my knowledge will grow in return. Lastly, my goal-making skills

have also improved as I continue to advance on my overall SMART goal and successfully complete my smaller monthly smart goals. As I near the end of my internship, I want to focus on my creativity skills when designing my portfolio. I want to make it unique and spend time on it to make it look nice. I believe that putting in the effort to make it unique and visually appealing will pay off, so that is what I want to advance in the coming months.

I believe that I have shown a lot of growth throughout the process. If I were a teacher looking at my own work, I think I would notice a bold move to head into a field that I didn't know anything about just to get a more interesting experience. From there, I would see consistent effort in turning in work on time, showing up to my internship consistently, and commitment to learning. When looking at my portfolio and the portfolio rubric, I think I would average around a 3+. I think my documentation is very good. I take photos every time I am at my internship and try to relate the photo to something I learned or did that day. Additionally, I even supplied extra stock photos to explain the type of machine or tool that I was shown that day. I also think I am very reflective in my daily journals and put a lot of effort into talking about employability skills and SMART goals in my conference sheets and reflections. I also make all my monthly SMART goals relating to advancing my big SMART goal. Regarding writing mechanics, I edit all my assignments before turning them in and try to use fitting vocabulary, so this should get a good grade. I also think I have put a lot of effort into my time management. I consistently go on Tuesdays and Thursdays at least 5x a month if there aren't any other circumstances. Like I mentioned before, there have been gaps due to sickness and Hurricane Helene, but I have made up for that time by making my schedules for each month fit my over 60 hour goal. Lastly, I think at this point, my effort in my portfolio is lacking a bit. It is currently my monthly SMART goal to work on my portfolio, and I haven't worked on it as much as I would like. Due to this, it isn't

as polished and refined as I would like it to be. Despite my current portfolio effort status, I am aiming for my final portfolio effort to be a 4.

If I had the chance to have a do-over, one main thing I would change is seeking a more hands-on experience. While I find shadowing very interesting and educational, I wish my internship had more opportunities for hands-on work. While it is tough because it is a healthcare field, I think working more closely would be very engaging and educational. Additionally, I would have wanted to look more closely at the technician aspect of it. While I don't want to become a technician, who is the person who works in the lab making the equipment, I think it is still valuable to understand the different roles of the job. I saw small parts of the technician's job, but it would be interesting to see more. Unfortunately, one of the technicians stopped working at Hanger in the middle of my internship, which makes it harder to do this. As I near the end of my internship, I want to make a goal to better understand the technician's job. This will help encapsulate the full experience of the prosthetics field because it isn't just made up of clinicians. I can better understand the role of a technician and hold myself accountable for completing it in two steps. The first is documenting extra research I do on the job. This can include videos or articles and could even be my final annotated bibliography. The other could be talking to Brad, who is the technician at Hanger Clinic. I can document my discussions with him in my daily journals. By doing these two steps, I will properly hold myself accountable for completing this goal and gain valuable knowledge regarding a new career in the field of prosthetics.