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**In Memoriam: Christine A. Nelson, PhD., OTR**

It is with much sadness that we report the recent passing of one of NDTA's Pediatric Coordinator Instructors.

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## CLINICIAN'S CORNER

### The NDT Light-Bulb Experience

How One Therapist Gained New Understanding after an NDT Course

By Theresa Angeli, MPT

Last year I took Jane Styer-Acevedo's 8-week NDT/Bobath Certificate Course in the Treatment and Management of Individuals with Cerebral Palsy and Other Neuromotor Disorders. I can honestly say that this course made me a better therapist and changed the way I practice therapy. The training gave me a stronger foundation in the treatment of children with neurological impairments.



During this course, it was as if a light bulb turned on in my head; it helped me to see therapy clearly. I now feel confident that I can determine how to go about treating any child. The course also gave me a framework for organizing my treatment sessions and I use that framework for all my clients.

Although at first I wanted to start learning treatment techniques immediately, that's not how the course began. Instead, we started with an introduction to something called the ICF model (the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health). We then learned how the NDT approach modifies the ICF model to include motor function. At the time I thought, "Great! Another model to learn." I soon realized that the modified ICF model was an essential piece in helping me become a better therapist.

The critical component of this "modified ICF model" was teaching us to analyze a child's posture and movement while he or she was performing a functional activity. We learned how to create an outcome which led to 'a posture and movement' then system level impairments' and finally treatment strategies. Initially it was hard to think in this top down model, but now I personally use this as my framework when treating any of my clients.

The essential link that the NDT course added to the ICF model was the analysis of posture and movement. This was a big light bulb for me that helped me understand the fundamental elements necessary to analyze in a child. Now that I know how to

evaluate a child's posture and movement, I am better able to treat the impairments that limit the child from achieving his goals.

During the NDT course, we had the opportunity to practice the modified ICF model in great detail, which allowed me to integrate the model into my own personal practice. Ironically, although I had seen the ICF model presented in other courses, it was always brief, and therefore it never became part of my own work.

**Newfound Understanding**

Other light bulbs that went off in my head during the course that have influenced my practice include an understanding of:

1. The importance of differentiating between muscles which work to maintain posture and stability and those which produce movement and how to choose treatment strategies (i.e. strengthening or stabilizing) appropriately. This changed my perspective of what muscles need to be strengthened and what muscles need to be stabilized.
2. The importance of using passive treatment techniques versus active treatment techniques. Most significant was learning which technique to use, how to use it, and when to use it.
3. The importance of looking at all bodily systems when analyzing posture and movement. As a PT, I had a strong tendency to focus on the musculoskeletal system and neurological systems. Now I make it a point to look at the sensory system, respiratory system, and regulatory system.

The NDT course helped me become a well-rounded therapist. I work in a school setting, and knowledge from this course has significantly aided me in treating a child's postural system. In addition, I am now able to look at any of the child's IEP goals (PT, OT, and SLP) and figure out how I can improve the child's posture or movement to help the child achieve his goal

What I was most happy about was that after taking the NDT course I felt as if all the pieces had fallen into place. In treating a child, I could now see the whole therapy picture. Knowledge of NDT has strengthened me as a therapist in general, but especially with the pediatric neurological population. I consider this NDT course as the best investment I have ever made in strengthening my clinical skills. It has changed my practice. I would definitely recommend this course to any person working in pediatrics.

It's difficult to put into words the immense amount of knowledge that I gained from this course and all the ways NDT has influenced my practice. NDT is my foundation and framework, and I am deeply grateful for having had the opportunity to be NDT trained.

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