

RIQ/RI-PTN TCPI Exemplary Story: Elite Physical Therapy



Photo Above: Michael Nula, MSPT, DPT, and Jason Harvey of Elite Physical Therapy center our organization’s focus around our Mission Statement: *“To deliver the highest quality physical therapy management with superior service for outstanding results, and do all of “the little things” that help each patient to enjoy an exceptional, ‘elite’ experience and refer others to us.”*

Elite Physical Therapy is a Rhode Island based organization with ten regional facilities. Our approximately fifty clinicians provide care to patients suffering from musculoskeletal dysfunction through a range of physical therapy specialty programs including Dry Needling, the Graston Technique, Sports Medicine, Women’s Health, Children’s Health and Balance and Fall Prevention. We also have three locations at which we provide Aqua Therapy for patients who would benefit from this approach. We have received numerous awards, most recently including the 2018 Providence Journal Reader’s Choice Award, and the 2018 Providence Business News Best Places to Work award. Michael Nula and Jason Harvey, Co-Owners of Elite Physical Therapy, credit our organization’s success to our commitment to excellence, education, and a strong focus on our organizational mission. This has led to a culture that fosters joy and efficiency in our practice, engages in our community and provides strong patient and family engagement.

Excellence in Patient Care Stemming from Excellence in Education and a Team Approach

At Elite Physical Therapy, Michael Nula and Jason Harvey argue that success starts with a commitment to excellence and a focus on our mission statement: *“To deliver the highest quality physical therapy management with superior service for outstanding results, and do all of “the little things” that help each patient to enjoy an exceptional, ‘elite’ experience and refer others to us.”* This mission statement is posted throughout our facilities and we truly live by it. In order to do this, we strive to maintain an exemplary culture within our practices. From our perspective, high quality in care stems from having a high level of skill and education for *all* staff at every level of our organization.

Given this, Nula and Harvey explain, “We put a lot into the training and development of the ‘backstage staff’ as well as the ‘front stage.’” Individuals at Elite Physical Therapy have the opportunity to attend multiple training courses each year. Providing excellent training for *all* staff is a priority as every role within each practice and office is valued. For example, if staff who handle billing and collections do a good job managing their tasks, this is one piece of a well-trained, efficient, ‘well-oiled machine’ working together and can have an impact on customer service and the overall patient experience. Of course, clinical staff at our facilities share in our deep engagement in continuous learning. For our clinical team, this includes a continuous cycle of education, mentoring and teaching. They participate in education that targets the newest techniques available, as well as scientific updates relating to our field.

Our emphasis on training is also supported by clearly written and maintained documentation of procedures and policies for staff at Elite Physical Therapy. All positions within the organization have manuals that are constantly updated and improved based on best practice standards for their role. The training and clear definition of roles we provide lead to strong staff communication, and supports our teams being able to hold each other to task in a positive way. It is important to note that providing education and clear expectations for staff also leads to joy in work at Elite Physical Therapy. Nula and Harvey have found that this approach has been a “great way to keep an even playing field with everyone and to keep things fair,” in our workplace.

Additionally, our emphasis on education spills into our approach in providing optimal patient care. As expressed by our mission statement, the “Elite experience” is one in which the patient has an experience that doesn’t feel like ‘just another doctor’s appointment.’ Included in the treatment our physical therapy team provides is an engagement in getting to know the *human being* we are working with so we can understand what each individual wishes they could do. Tied into this is significant research supporting the development of a *therapeutic alliance* with patients in improved outcomes related to physical therapy. Therefore, our clinical approach emphasizes building rapport and trust with individuals. It also includes supporting the cognitive awareness of patients so they are better able to engage in their own healing. *How can they help take pain out of the equation? How can they work towards leading a more active and healthier life?*

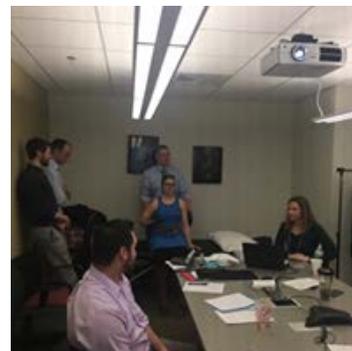
Following this methodology, we believe making sure our patients have clarity on such questions is just as important as the technique used to treat them. To this end, the thoughtful inclusion of *teaching* as part of patient care arguably sets Elite Physical Therapy apart. Together, our therapists and patients communicate and work together towards solutions. The numerous patient testimonials available on our website (<https://elitephysicaltherapy.com/patient-successes/>) provide evidence of the

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success fostered by this approach. Our excellence in patient care can also be assessed through information available in a national database on functional outcomes. Elite Physical Therapy frequently ranks in the top percentiles based on national functional outcomes measures. As seen on our website (<https://elitephysicaltherapy.com/patient-successes/>) we rank in the top 10% in the country and boast a 94% success rate with our patients.



*At Elite Physical Therapy, ongoing training for **all** staff is valued and prioritized.*



Elite Physical Therapy Community Engagement

Not surprisingly, Elite Physical Therapy's focus on education and teaching spills over into our relationships within our community. Along with our internal trainings and patient education, we have taught a range of healthcare providers about the benefits of physical therapy. In particular, we are engaged in working towards improvements at the state level in Rhode Island through our active involvement in a subgroup of the RI Governors Opioid Task Force. We have provided training and seminars for the community that focused on alternative therapies for pain, such as those provided by physical therapists. This effort has also included provider trainings targeting additional topics, such as addressing barriers for access in care for patients (including financial challenges and time for patients). Through the education we provide, providers in the community have more clarity on the ways we are able to help their patients.

Additionally, we have been involved in a legislative proposal to effect the co-pay charged to patients seeking physical therapy. Specifically, we proposed making the co-pay the same amount it would be if the patient saw his/her primary care provider. Given that physical therapy is arguably a significantly better alternative than prescribing opioids for many conditions, we believe it is critical that we prevent cost from being a barrier for patients in pain. We believe this may be helpful in addressing the Opioid Crisis that our country is facing.

Patient and Family Engagement and Enhanced Efficiency at Elite Physical Therapy

Given our strong focus on optimizing the Elite experience, we provide our patients with numerous opportunities to share feedback and suggestions with our practice. Patient surveys are conducted after every initial evaluation, every 7th visit and at discharge. Additionally, our waiting rooms all include feedback boxes in which patients can confidentially share their perspectives, as well.

We take action when we hear from our patients. Based on feedback received, we have implemented a number of innovative processes that have led to an improved patient experience and enhanced efficiency for our staff. For example, we are using a new system that streamlines our process for prescribing exercise for patients and allows for a deeper engagement with the content available. With this tool, our clinicians have a convenient search engine they can use to find the exercises they would like to recommend. Patients then easily access the information at home through a mobile app. We also have an enhanced patient experience specific to registration. This workflow leverages our patient portal: rather than completing numerous forms when patients come in for their visits, they can enter the necessary registration and history information into the portal (either at home or at a kiosk in the waiting room). On this platform, it is easy for patients to save their documents and refer to previous history and information when they return. Patients benefit from being able to simply edit existing data rather than have to fill out a whole new set of paperwork each time they come in.

Conclusion

At Elite Physical Therapy, our ultimate goal is to help our patients get from the "start line to the finish line" regarding their physical therapy treatment. We prioritize helping patients attain their clinical goals and supporting them through the *whole process* of their care. To accomplish this, the Elite team stays dialed into our core mission and work to foster an exemplary culture, role clarity and strong educational programs for staff at all levels. As a part of our emphasis on education, we look for opportunities to share information with other providers in our community and work towards solutions for challenges within our field, such as the Opioid Epidemic. Importantly, we regularly engage patients and families so we can use their feedback as a springboard for identifying ways to innovate. Overall, our organization's success stems from our commitment to excellence, education and a strong focus on our organizational mission.