Physical therapy is described as a health profession and involves the professional interaction between physical therapist, physical therapist assistance, patients, other health care providers, and even patient’s families and communities. The facility I chose to observe is an outpatient clinic with a team of two physical therapists and a rehabilitation aide. This reflection paper will discuss how the physical therapists that I have observed perform the professionalism and professional behavior during patient care and how the clinical experience impact my career decision to continue in the Physical Therapy area.

When the patients come to physical therapy, they expect to receive a beneficial care. From my point of view, the physical therapist has performed professionally in the process of examination and intervention to treat and care patients. During examination, I have seen how the PT communicate effectively with patients to understand their needs. The effective communication helps give a good impression of the profession to the patients at the first stage. After gathering patient’ information, the PT demonstrates a quality skill in “test and measurement” to determinant individuals’ diagnosis and uses current knowledge to design a “plan of care” that would help patients to achieve the best outcome. Once the process of intervention begins, I can see how the PT’s decision and clinical technique is validated by patient’s optimal outcome. The PT needs to have effective communicating skill, which include oral, written, listening, and nonverbal communication skills. For example, the PT needs to clearly explain what he does, why
physical therapy needs to be done, and what his expectation is. When the patient speaks, asks questions and addresses concerns, the PT has to attentively listen to make sure patient's needs are understood correctly. He is also very sensible to the facial expressions, body postures and gestures that his patients show during the treatment. From communicating with patient, he is able to decide if patient need to continue or stop the further intervention. When patients have reached the goal and outcome, he will discharge them with suggestions of the home program. Most of the patients graduated from physical therapy with happy face. Overall, I think the PT has efficiently performed the patient/client management model, and promoted the optimal health care to patient.

Because of the location and reputation of the clinic, the PT has plenty of chances to provide service to low-income people and even refugees who do not speak English. Regardless of patient's appearance and social status, the PT always stay close with them, put hand on them and treat everyone is the same. Because of the high cost of medical care, the PT always try to avoid over-utilization of physical therapy. When they complain about the copayment of every visit, the PT would consider the situation they have and try to design a home program/interventions that are suitable with their needs. This can cut down the number of times the patient has to visit the clinic and therefore decrease their cost. When English isn’t patient’s first language, the PT accepts the patients like others by offering free interpreter. If the interpreter is not available, the PT will patiently use body language and simplify the words to overcome the body language. Given the diverse background of the patients, the PT has to understand the economic, socio-cultural, and psychological influences on individual’s life in order to provide best
care to the patients. Hence, I think the physical therapist had performed professionally in "compassion" by treating the health needs of people who is from local, national, or global.

Nowadays, new technology, new clinical evidence and research findings keep coming out in the field of healthcare. It is important for physical therapist to continuously improve in the quality of care for patients/clients. The PT, who has over 10 years of experience in the field, has mentioned that he regularly attends the national conference in the field and keeps connecting with other healthcare providers to learn and share ideas. He also joins the professional development activities administrated by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) to expand the knowledge in physical therapist practice, education, healthcare delivery, and technology. If there is case that he or his peers aren't familiar with, he would try to do research in multiple sources and share his knowledge with others to support the practice and decision during treatment. He always keeps eyes on recent developments in physical therapy from varies sources, such as reading PT journals, articles, and magazines. Nevertheless, the PT always keeps his knowledge up to date in order to provide the best patient care possible.

While I was shadowing, I saw the rehab aide had performed tasks that may be outside of her realm. The first evidence is that the facility let the rehab aide educate patients on exercise and equipment usage under general supervision. The rehab aide used her limited knowledge and skill to communicate with patient and patient's family members while teaching the exercise. Sometimes, the rehab aide even made modifications to the selected interventions either to progress the patient as directed by
the PTs or to ensure patient safety and comfort. I had even heard patients wondering if the rehab aide had received a certification or had enough training to performance the task. Second, the rehab aides provided the electrotherapeutic modalities to treat patients such as ultrasound, electrical stimulation, and traction. Some of patients would love to know how the modalities work on them and what the benefits would be. However, the rehab aide has only trained to operate the machines but nothing more. Therefore, I am concerning if the facility has used the rehabilitation aide inappropriately while there should be a physical therapy assistant to provide the physical therapy interventions under the direction and supervision of the physical therapist.

The experience of clinical observation has given me a deeper and better understanding of physical therapy. While I was shadowing, I was able to see how the physical therapist has effective provided service to patients, served the profession, and positively influenced the health and wellness needs of the society. They have to have in-depth knowledge in the field of physical therapy specifically and in human body movement, function and health. They need to have effective communication skill since they need to deal with people directly all the time. They also need to have great sense of the socio-cultural, economic and psychological influences on individual's life in order to make the caring more human. Finally, they need to continue to learn in order to apply the latest and great knowledge in the field. I am a person who loves to help people, likes to promote health, likes to learn how human body functions. Therefore, the field of physical therapy perfectly fit my personal interests and goal. I am looking forward to the opportunity and challenge in journey of becoming a physical therapy professional.