

## Healthcare Panel

- **Autumn Valk – PA Orthopedic Trauma Gundersen - [AValk@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:AValk@gundersenhealth.org)**
  - What was your path?
    - She had a pediatrician that was amazing, and she took the time to explain everything. Inspired her to pursue medicine.
    - She then fell in love with the human anatomy
    - Was a CNA
    - Didn't get into med school after college and found out about PA school
      - Loved the idea of specialty jumping
      - Wanted orthopedics all the way through
  - What does your role look like?
    - Varies
    - Can have a full clinic day
    - Hospital
      - Rounds on hospital patients
    - Surgery
      - Can scrub in on plastic surgery
      - Free flaps and skin grafts
    - Takes first call in area once every 6 weeks?
  - Interdisciplinary work
    - Utilize people as your eyes and ears
  - How did you find balance between work and life?
    - Be flexible
    - Lean on your friends and people
  - How will things change?
    - There will be more PAs
  - What your favorite thing about your job?
    - The trust that you can build with your patients and the long-standing relationships
    - Seeing patients walk out the door with what they wanted or what they've gained
  
- **McKenzi Shornack – Director of AT at UWL - [mschornack@uwlax.edu](mailto:mschornack@uwlax.edu)**
  - Works with men's football and basketball
  - Graduated from UWL
  - What was your path?

- Wanted to do AT because she loved sports
  - Didn't want to be in a clinic all day, every day
  - Wanted to be with the athletes and get out of the office
  - Started as a bachelor's degree in AT and continued to get her masters in kinesiology
  - Started working part time as a AT and is now full time and now director
- What does your role look like?
  - Director
    - Flexible
  - Traditional AT
    - Half of day is directed by sports coverage with practices and games (usually afternoons)
    - Other half is self-directed
      - Meeting with coaches, administration, preparing for patients, etc.
    - Prevention programs, evaluation of injury, prepare to get back to sport and back to life, practice coverage, game coverage
    - If you work for a high school, you usually work in a clinic in the mornings as well
    - Can work for factories, corporations, dance companies, branches of the military, police departments, fire department, etc.
      - All settings will be different for what you see
- Interdisciplinary work
  - Well trained in acute care
  - Most people with mental health will go to them first because athletes get very comfortable with them and trust them
    - Work with counseling and testing
  - Referred people to ortho or PT for post-op patients
    - Coordinate the appropriate care for the athletes
  - Work with physicians that come in and help out
  - Can see the patients every day, so that is helpful in coordinating extra care
- How have things changed or will things change?
  - People knowing that ATs can be helpful in a lot of different stages of care

- AT used to only require a bachelor's degree, now requires a masters
    - Settings have branched out
  - What is your favorite thing about your job?
    - Seeing your athlete succeed
      - Whether that means getting healthier, succeeding in class or life, winning a team championship
    - Loves game days
      - Everything you have worked hard on all week comes to fruition
    - Seeing people come back from bad injuries and all the work they put in
    - Even the small wins
- **Lisa Morgan – OT - [Morgan.Lisa@mayo.edu](mailto:Morgan.Lisa@mayo.edu)**
  - What was your path?
    - Started in nursing and was in junior year and realized she did not like what she was doing
    - Did more investigation and talked to sister who was an OT
    - Loved it
  - What does your role look like?
    - Can be varied
    - See womb to tomb
    - Can be in any area: hospitals, schools, nursing homes, etc.
      - Many specialties such as geriatrics etc.
    - Hospitals
      - Often work in specific areas such as hand work or feeding depending on the specialties they see
      - Varies
    - Skilled nursing facilities
      - Activities of daily living rehabilitation
        - Showering, eating, shaving, dressing, etc.
      - Working on independence
  - Interdisciplinary work
    - Ability to reach out to colleagues
      - Co-treated for patients to give them the best care
      - Use of collaborative team mentality is huge
      - It doesn't work if you don't utilize your team and outside resources

- Need to know who to reach out to so that patient gets the right care
    - We can learn together, we are stronger together
- How did you find balance between work and life?
  - Life changes
    - Wasn't in a relationship and loved to work all the time
    - When she got married and had kids, priorities shifted
  - Now does management
    - Supporting her employees
  - Had to not look at emails out of the office – create healthy boundaries for yourself. The work will still be there in the morning
  - Take care of yourself so you can take care of your patient
  - May have heavy patients with difficult stories, but you need to be able to separate when you go home
- How have things changed or will things change?
  - There are more specialties and subspecialties
    - Can be as specific as pelvic health
  - Gives you opportunities to be creative
  - Ability to practice differently
  - Challenging facts
    - Can be hard to keep healthcare sustainable
    - Might have to fit more patients into the schedule, meaning less individual patient time
  - Must find ways to provide care to keep us thriving
- What is your favorite thing about your job?
  - Had a young 18-year-old who became paraplegic from gang violence
    - Very outgoing young man
    - Started crying because he couldn't dress himself and he was worried about what his friends would think
      - Talked through it – allow yourself as a provider to feel some pain --> connect with them
      - “Being tough is not about what you can or cannot do, it is about what you choose to do”
      - Allow yourself to truly be with the person without barriers
    - Gave him her business card and he called her for all his life milestones

- **Dr. Tommy Means – RT assistant professor - [wmeans@uwlax.edu](mailto:wmeans@uwlax.edu)**
  - Masters in rec therapy at UWL
  - PHD in Leisure behavior
  - What was your path?
    - Art educator and dropped out after second year, did mechanic
    - Went back to school for exercise science, pre-PT
      - Shadowed and didn't like it as much
      - Worked at a camp for people with disabilities and loved it and found out about recreational therapy and loved it
      - Did masters in rec therapy at UWL from there
  - What does your role look like?
    - Teaching
      - Researches philosophy of leisure
    - Jobs in rec therapy
      - Indoor
        - Large groups of clients (up to 20 individuals)
        -
      - Hospital
      - School
      - Camps
        - Using adventure activities as recreational therapy interventions
      - Wounded warriors program
        - Individual goals for the clients
        - What intervention activities to move toward those goals
          - Often in that setting it was ropes courses, raft building
      - What is rec therapy?
        - The intentional use of recreation or leisure to help someone with a disability, a diagnosis, or an illness to cope with or improve their overall physical health, mental health, and quality of life.
      - Run a program, document, and see how it went
        - Assess and plan specifically for clients and see how it works and adjust from there
  - Interdisciplinary work

- Brings passion and fun to an interdisciplinary team
- Can find out what people love to do and that is where they start
  - Find ways to tie what they love to do into getting them toward their goals
- Work with other therapies to get toward goals
- A patient may want to get back to skiing and a rec therapist may help get them into seated skiing, which ignites their confidence and passion. That excitement may help keep people going to PT
- Might now work directly with PT, OT, or PA
  - But they might be in a community setting where they may not work directly with other providers but give people the excitement to continue with their other therapies
- Brings excitement!
- How did you find balance between work and life?
  - He has degrees in leisure and recreation, so that is kind of his whole passion
  - It is incredibly important to do leisure
    - Be consistent with the things that you love
  - Let go of expectations a little bit
    - We get hung up on timelines, but we still need to make sure we do the things we love
    - Otherwise, what is the point?
  - Prescription: do the things you love!
  - Try not to be therapist and client\*\*\*\*
    - Try to be two humans working through things
    - Sometimes it sucks, sometimes it is awesome!
      - That is life, embrace it for what it is
    - You are human and so are the people you are working with
- How have things changed or will things change?
  - Recognition will hopefully change
    - Hoping that insurance will recognize the importance so patients can seek care that they need
  - Insurance doesn't care about passions
  - Can have private companies
    - Allows people to get paid more
  - Advocacy
  - Recreational therapy is still a bachelor's degree

- Need a bachelor's degree, internship, and passing an exam
  - What your favorite thing about your job?
    - Loves reading philosophy as a professor
    - Loves to get to do the activities that he does in therapy
      - At camp, he was with a person who was able to shoot an arrow and hit the target and his whole demeanor changed from disengaged to happy and smiling for the rest of the week
    - Helping people find their passion and get back to what they love to do
- **Lisa VanWiel – Physical Therapy - [lvanwiel@uwlax.edu](mailto:lvanwiel@uwlax.edu)**
  - Pelvic floor disfunction
  - Defending PhD next!
  - What was your path?
    - Taught dance class for kids with disabilities and always wanted to do PT
    - Always wanted to do pediatrics
    - Had a baby earlier than planned, didn't do residency and so she got into clinic
      - Found out she didn't want to deal with kids all day and then go home to be with her kids
    - Went into skilled nursing
      - Loved the flexibility of the schedule
    - Was in the skilled nursing facility during covid and left for a while because she was burnt out
    - Joined a women's workout class
      - People were leaving because of bladder control
    - Found a research lab looking at pregnancy and post-partum activity
      - Urinary incontinence and how that affects their physical activity
      - Will be defending her PhD on this topic!!!
  - What does your role look like?
    - Teaches for PT
    - Researches and has 6 students
    - Is a part of committees that do community service
    - Flexible days, changes a lot
  - Interdisciplinary work
    - PT is gross motor skills

- Loves working with nurses
  - They know everything!
- Remember that there are people who see more than you and you need to lean on them and trust them
- How did you find balance between work and life?
  - PT school felt all-consuming
  - PhD felt better because she had other things that were also important to her
  - Has a lot of work and life
    - With kids during the week
    - Works during nights or weekends
  - Covid was incredibly difficult
    - Daughter lived with grandparents for two months
  - When you enjoy it, do that, but switch if it doesn't serve you anymore\*\*
- How have things changed or will things change?
  - PTs now need a doctorate
  - PT professors need a PhD
  - The need for therapists has risen
  - Education has gone up, but reimbursement has not followed that trend
    - Cash-based private practices are now more common
- What is your favorite thing about your job?
  - She has just as many life to work top 10 moments
  - Worked with a girl whose legs were amputated by a lawn mower when she was young and then ran a race some years later
  - Moments of victory and seeing the hope that you can be a part of