Two decades of excellence in acute care therapy

“The grass is greenest where you water it the most,” states Joe Adler, PT, DPT, CCS who celebrated his 20 year anniversary with Penn Medicine and Good Shepherd Penn Partners this past year. His lengthy tenure as an acute care therapist includes a body of research; APTA board certification; teaching appointments at Arcadia, Drexel, University of the Sciences and Widener; and daily job satisfaction. The New York native jokes, “Penn was my first and only employer as a physical therapist.”

This combination of gratifying work, continuous professional advancement and mentoring of new clinicians has held Joe’s interest for the past two decades.

“I’m excited to be here. Working together with other smart, dedicated clinicians to do what’s best for the patient has influenced and informed my own practice,” says Joe. “Even after 20 years, I still learn something every day. Regardless of your environment, the feedback and depth of your working relationships is very important. I honestly look forward to coming to work every day.”

Joe describes his work in the acute care setting as ‘autonomous,’ stating, “I have ownership over my decisions, yet they are based on the input of my colleagues. Once you understand this dynamic, it can be a very empowering environment.”

In addition to his teaching appointments, Joe has run the acute care therapy internship at HUP for almost 10 years. “I have a unique opportunity because I am a full-time clinician and am also experienced in the academic environment. Bridging the gap between the two is highly important. We want to embed ourselves in the curriculum, which creates a better experience for students and allows us to understand what students are currently being taught.”

Penn’s emphasis on professional development has played a big part in Joe’s commitment to the health system. He was supported in obtaining the APTA’s board certification in cardiovascular and pulmonary physical therapy and in contributing to various research studies.

Joe began his career as an outpatient therapist before transitioning to an inpatient rehab unit – both models where he didn’t feel completely comfortable. Finally, after
nearly four years, Joe found his home in acute care.

“Acute therapists fill a very important niche,” says Joe. “We tie up the loose ends for patients by defining the plan. Once they understand they are working towards function, the whole equation changes.”

The walls in Joe’s office are covered with photos of role reversal, where grinning patients push Joe in a wheelchair – displaying their physical progress.

“I’m 52,” he says. “At the end of the week, I get tired. But the one-on-one connection I feel with patients is what this is all about.”

Read more about Joe and Good Shepherd Penn Partners in the 2014 Community Report.