

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY & SHIRLEY RYAN ABILITYLAB
Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Information Packet for
Admitting the Residency Cohort: 2027-2028

Thank you for your interest in The Northwestern University & Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Program. We are pleased that you are interested in furthering your education, accelerating your professional development, and enhancing your clinical reasoning skills. Our application cycle starts on October 1 each year, and usually closes on Martin Luther King Day.

Residency Description

The Northwestern University & Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency (NU-SRALab Orthopaedic Residency) is a 53-week program designed for licensed physical therapists interested in orthopaedic specialization and training under the auspices of a nationally top-ranked rehabilitation hospital, academic medical center, and physical therapy program. The residency is a partnership between the Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences (PTHMS) of the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine (FSM) and Shirley Ryan AbilityLab (SRALab). Orthopaedic clinical practice and training take place in the SRALab hospital or at Northwestern Medicine clinics. The residency didactic curriculum is taught at NU-PTHMS. This includes a Core curriculum which is shared with Neurologic and Acute Care residents, a Teaching Practicum, where the residents assist in DPT coursework and classroom orthopaedic physical therapy lectures and laboratory sessions on a weekly basis.

Top-Ranked Institutions in a World Class City

The Northwestern Medicine Campus Located in the heart of Chicago's famed Magnificent Mile district, just a short walk from Lake Michigan with its 27-mile-long lakefront bike paths and close-by beaches and harbors, the medical campus enjoys all the benefits of this vibrant global city and its myriad cultural, sporting and entertainment opportunities. The medical campus includes several institutions collectively known as Northwestern Medicine, plus two independent specialty hospitals, SRALab, and Lurie Children's Hospital, both of which are linked to Northwestern Medicine with regards to medical faculty, medical residency training, and other collaborations.

NU-SRALab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Shirley Ryan AbilityLab

In 2017, the nation's #1 ranked rehabilitation hospital, the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, moved into a new hospital, almost tripling its square footage, and enabling it to maintain its global leadership in cutting edge rehabilitation and science for decades to

come. In doing so, “RIC” got a new name, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, thanks to the generosity of the Ryan family that made the new hospital possible. Every year since 1991, U.S. News & World Report has ranked SRAlab as the “#1 Rehabilitation Hospital in America” an unparalleled recognition of SRAlab’s success in realizing its visionary commitment “to advance human ability”.

Northwestern Medicine

Northwestern Medicine (NM) is the shared strategic vision of Northwestern Memorial HealthCare and Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine to transform the future of healthcare. NM includes hospitals, medical practice groups, immediate care centers, cancer centers and more. The institutions making up the Northwestern Medicine health system are the NU Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH), and Northwestern Medical Group (NMG). NMG is a multi-specialty practice of approximately 1000 physicians wholly owned by Northwestern Memorial Health Care, the holding company for NMH.

Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences (PTHMS)

Consistently ranked among the top 10 U.S. physical therapy schools (currently ranked #4) by U.S. News & World Report, PTHMS is the oldest physical therapy school in the U.S. and has garnered a global reputation for:

- Excellence in training the next generation of leaders in physical therapy practice and research through professional and post-professional education programs.
- Training new researchers in the field of Movement and Rehabilitation Science (MRS).
- Development and implementation of technology-supported therapeutic interventions.
- Advances in rehabilitation science including the quantification of movement disorders and clinical outcomes.

Besides its renowned physical therapy school, PTHMS is increasingly recognized for its unique dual-degree DPT-PhD program in conjunction with NU’s McCormick School of Engineering, and a PhD degree in Movement and Rehabilitation Science offered through NUIN, the Northwestern University Interdepartmental Neuroscience PhD program.

Residency Accreditation Status

The NU-SRAlab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency is accredited by the American Physical Therapy Association as a post-professional residency for physical therapists in orthopaedic physical therapy.

NU-SRAlab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Mission

The NU-SRAlab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency is a training ground and model for the advanced practice of orthopaedic physical therapy in the 21st century,

focusing on science-based clinical reasoning, effective and efficient examination and evaluation, evidence-based application of orthopaedic physical therapy interventions, patient education based on sound biomechanical and health literacy principles, and participation in research and data collection towards the advancement of orthopaedic physical therapy practice and research.

Residency Vision

Our vision is to mobilize the abundant scientific, educational, and healthcare resources of Northwestern University, Northwestern Medicine, and SRAlab, to foster development of the next generation of regional, national, and global leaders in orthopaedic physical therapy.

Goals

The NU-SRAlab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency will train residents to achieve:

- Science-based clinical reasoning.
- Incorporation of clinical practice guidelines in daily practice.
- Effective and efficient examination and evaluation.
- Evidence-based application of manual therapy, therapeutic exercise, and other orthopaedic procedures.
- Development of cognitive, affective, psychosocial, and psychomotor skills in the area of orthopaedic physical therapy.
- Effective biomechanical and kinesiological patient education and management.
- Participation in research and data collection towards the advancement of the science and practice of orthopaedic physical therapy.
- Participation in the education of DPT students.
- Development of professional and leadership capabilities through the honing of skills involving communication and inter-professional interactions.

Detailed residency goals and objectives are available upon request.

Residency Program and Content

The typical week for a resident: Residents are typically scheduled for 28 clinical hours plus 4 hours of clinical mentoring (32 total clinical hours) per week. Weekend hours may be occasionally required. Other residency activities such as didactic sessions, mentored teaching in the DPT program, special clinical observations and experiences, research, journal club, and study-time are in addition to scheduled clinical time. All told, clinical, didactic, teaching, self-study, and other activities total 45 to 55 hours per week.

Clinical practice will occur at:

SRAlab Hospital, 355 E. Erie Street, Chicago, IL, 60611

Northwestern Medicine, 1704 Maple Ave Suite 110, Evanston, IL 60201

Clinical mentoring:

The residency incorporates 150 to 200 hours of clinical mentoring (4 hours per week), over 2/3 of which involves the mentor observing or co-treating with the resident, followed by case-discussion. SRAlab, Northwestern Medicine and PTHMS have over 70 physical therapist board certified specialists (OCS, NCS, GCS, PCS, and WCS) including several Fellowship trained physical therapists. Your residency mentors have been chosen from this unique pool of talent. Educational content:

Over 350 hours of didactic component are planned. This will be delivered on a weekly basis in person at the Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences. Additionally, each resident will be responsible for independent study (and passing the examinations) of the Orthopaedic Residency Curriculum monographs published by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Physical Therapy (AOPT, a section of APTA). All didactic content required by ABPTRFE will be covered. This will prepare residents for the ABPTS orthopaedic board certification examination required to earn the OCS credential. Lead instructors will be board-certified specialists in orthopaedic physical therapy, fellows of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapy, (FAAOMPT), and/or PhD-trained. Content will be presented through the lens of the ICF, Northwestern's Motor Control Framework, and current orthopaedic PT clinical practice guidelines, with emphasis on unifying neuro-musculoskeletal principles based on the anatomy, physiology, and biomechanics of disease, tissue damage, and tissue repair.

Learning modules will include:

- The Motor Control Framework, the movement system, and the ICF.
- Clinical reasoning and management approaches across the lifespan
- Clinical Applications of Orthopaedic Basic Science
- Cardiovascular, pulmonary and endocrine considerations in orthopaedics
- Post-Operative Management of Orthopaedic Surgeries
- Pharmacology
- Diagnostic Imaging in Physical Therapy
- Evidence-based orthopaedic practice
- Special populations and complex cases
- Clinical reasoning including biomechanics, anatomy and pathology by region:
 - Spine and pelvis
 - Hip
 - Knee
 - Foot & Ankle
 - TMJ
 - Shoulder
 - Elbow
 - Wrist and hand
 - Didactic content will be delivered through readings, lectures, discussions, and other learning strategies.

Examples of didactic content include:

- Lectures, resident discussions, workshops, and labs led by a residency faculty member.
- Resident-prepared reviews of important clinical topics.
- Case presentations and case analysis by residents and residency faculty.
- Differential diagnosis and management.
- Clinical reasoning.
- Manual therapy and exercise labs for technique instruction and practice.
- Anatomy labs featuring pro-section presentations by PTHMS anatomist.
- Weekend seminars or workshops provided by SRAlab Academy or PTHMS. NU-SRAlab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency 5
- Grand rounds opportunities in various related departments including: PTHMS, Orthopaedic Surgery, PM&R and others.
- Specialty Lectures throughout the academic medical center.
- Journal Club

Research:

Each resident will be responsible for completing an orthopaedic-focused research or scholarly project (which may be a case report) in conjunction with or under guidance of PTHMS faculty or SRAlab residency faculty/researchers at SRAlab. Research mentors will be available early in the residency year to guide the resident in developing their project if this is something the resident would like to pursue.

Each resident is responsible for submitting an abstract or case-report for a conference, or submit an abstract, case report or manuscript for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Either of these may be in conjunction with a faculty member, researcher, or colleague.

Teaching:

The resident will participate as teaching assistant in select courses within the DPT program.

DPT program lecture:

The resident may be asked to lead a lecture and/or lab in the DPT curriculum if deemed appropriate by the course director.

Specialty experiences:

- Specialty experiences available to the resident may include but are not limited to: Observations of various medical procedures such as imaging-guided injections, musculoskeletal ultrasound, EMG, etc.
- Participation in specialty clinics with orthopaedic surgeons and physiatrists.
- Observation or participation in specialty clinics such as chronic pain program, prosthetics/orthotics (including robotic prosthetic/orthotics), sports medicine and athletic training in conjunction with NU Athletics at the NU Evanston campus, etc.

- Participation in the review, analysis, and opinion-development of a real-world, current physical therapy malpractice case, as supervised by a PTHMS faculty member.
- Special events and volunteer opportunities such as the Chicago Marathon.
- Please note that specialty experiences may rely upon the resident's motivation and outreach to pursue available opportunities.

Option for M.S. in Health Services Outcomes Research (HSOR)

We are now able to offer a new additional option for a highly motivated resident. The Master of Science in HSOR prepares health professionals for careers in academia, health systems, and research and policy organizations. Residents have the opportunity to apply for the MS program and complete this degree in conjunction with the residency. Through completing this optional degree program, residents will learn to conduct methodologically sound research, create and disseminate new knowledge aimed at improving health services and outcomes, and secure grant funding to support research focused in identifying more effective ways to organize, finance, and deliver patient care to improve patient outcomes and quality of life. The degree's online, hybrid format allows residents to complete coursework prior to beginning residency and then complete remaining coursework following residency graduation through full or part time NU-SRALab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency 6 study while accommodating students residing outside the Chicago area.

Residents will receive a substantially reduced Northwestern tuition rate (\$32,000) for the entire degree program. If you are interested in this option, contact the residency director.

Residency logistics for SRALab-employed and NM-employed residents

- Residents will be salaried employees of SRALab or NM. For further details, see the SRALab/NM job description for Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Resident.
- Schedule includes approximately 32 clinical hours per week (including 4 hours of mentoring), zero to 6 hours of assistant-teaching in the DPT program (when classes are in session and depending on curriculum content), plus 10 to 15 hours devoted to the didactic program, research, independent study, and observations. Schedules may fluctuate to maximize clinical, didactic, and experiential opportunities.
- Due to the intensive nature of this 53-week residency training, outside employment during the residency is not feasible.
- Resident salary: \$58,000 per year as of 2026.
- PTO, Sick Days and benefits: As specified for full time employees in the current SRALab Employee Benefits Booklet, accrued vacation must be taken at the end of the residency. Residency Completion Upon completion of the 53-week residency, the resident's employment agreement with SRALab automatically expires. If the resident-graduate seeks further employment at SRALab, he or she should indicate this interest to their SRALab manager and the HR department well

before residency completion so that exploration of any open positions can begin, and an application submitted.

Eligibility and Requirements for Admission

- Every applicant must be licensed to practice physical therapy in Illinois or provide evidence that licensure will occur by the start of the residency. No residency candidate will be permitted to start the residency without licensure in effect on the starting date. For new graduates, taking the April board exam is recommended but not required.
- Every applicant must have completed at least 12 weeks of orthopaedic physical therapy practice (which may include time spent in student orthopaedic internships) at the time of application, or show evidence that such experience will have been completed prior to the first day of the residency.
- Admission to the residency requires successful completion of all the application procedures outlined below in the section “Residency Application Process” and as described on the RFPTCAS website.
- Every resident must meet all requirements for employment by SRAlab or Northwestern Medicine and be fully approved to start orientation as an employee prior to the first day of residency.
- Note: Residency slots are limited. Therefore, admission to the residency is a competitive process. The Residency Admissions Committee is committed to admitting qualified candidates who are deemed best prepared to contribute to accomplishing the Residency’s mission and goals. Residency Application Process
- All candidates must apply to the NU-SRAlab residency through the RF-PTCAS national common residency application system, online:
<http://www.abptrfe.org/RFPTCAS/ApplicantWebsite/>
- Besides the requirements of the RF-PTCAS, applicants must provide: NU-SRAlab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency
- Current CV.
- Letter of intent (750 words maximum) addressing the following:
 - Statement of current licensure and professional employment status.
 - A narrative summary of prior clinical and educational experience.
 - Personal goals and objectives for the orthopaedic residency.
 - A narrative self-assessment of orthopaedic clinical strengths and weaknesses.
 - Statement of resident’s short- and long-term goals for orthopaedic practice following successful completion of the residency.
- Three letters of recommendation, including at least 2 of the 3 following options:
 - Current or former physical therapist supervisor (or CI, if a recent graduate with less than 6 months experience).
 - Instructor or faculty member from a CAPTE-accredited physical therapy program, or a mentor from an accredited orthopaedic physical therapy residency.
 - A professional with whom the applicant has collaborated within the past year in clinical care, research, or physical therapy education.

- The PTHMS-SRALab Residency Admissions Committee reviews applications and selects candidates to proceed to the Interview Day. The Residency Admissions Committee is committed to admitting residents who, based on past educational, clinical, and personal achievements, demonstrate excellent prospects for successful completion of all residency requirements and application of their time and talent to the residency mission and goals. The optimal applicant will demonstrate evidence of potential to become a leader in the field of physical therapy. Applicants who are selected for interview should be prepared for topics such as:
 - Why do you want to complete an orthopaedic residency?
 - Discussion related to any application documents.
 - Discussion of clinical practice, patient cases, and professional issues.
 - Discussion of physical therapy research.
 - Demonstration of patient interactions or treatment plans.
- Admission into the residency is subject to the sole discretion of the Residency Admissions Committee and Residency Director, followed by the offer of employment by SRALab or Northwestern Medicine.
- If admitted to the residency, a candidate will receive a Letter of Acceptance into the Orthopaedic Residency from the Residency Director followed by an offer letter from SRALab or Northwestern Medicine Human Resources outlining the employee-onboarding requirements.
- An accepted candidate confirms intent to join the residency by taking the following actions:
 - Sends a \$200 non-refundable registration deposit to the Residency Director.
 - Signs the NU-SRALab Orthopaedic Physical Therapist Resident Agreement which describes obligations of both the Residency program and the Resident, and commits the resident to:
 - Start and complete the residency within in the allowed time frame.
 - Follow all residency policies, procedures, and rules.
 - Accept the residency financial agreement as to salary, benefits, tuition, and fees.
 - Make arrangements with SRALab or Northwestern Medicine Human Resources to complete any remaining employment requirements. If for any reason, at any time, the candidate is deemed by SRALab or Northwestern Medicine to be ineligible for employment, participation in the residency will be automatically denied or terminated.
 - Accept terms of SRALab/Northwestern Medicine employment agreement.
 - Tuition: Residency tuition is \$4,000 payable to Northwestern University. NU-SRALab Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency (The first of four \$1,000 payments (made out to Northwestern University) is due on the first day of the residency. The other 3 payments are due on November 1, February 1, and April 1.

- Resident Handbook More detailed information on residency policies including remediation, grievance, termination, medical leave, and other policies is provided in the Resident Handbook. This Resident Handbook will be provided to each candidate who receives an offer to join the residency (after Interview Day). The candidate is expected to read the Handbook prior to signing the offer letter.

Residency Calendar for 2026-2027

- Residency application submission deadline: December 31, 2026 (11:59pm EST)
- Interview Day for leading candidates selected by the admissions committee: January 15, 2027.
- Residency Director notifies candidates accepted into the residency: Typically, within 2 weeks of interview date (or earlier).

Residency starting date: Anticipated August 2027

For further information regarding the residency, please contact:

Director: Carol A. Courtney PT, PhD, ATC, FAPTA
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Co-Director: Melissa Kolski, PT, DPT, OCS
 Board-Certified Orthopedic Clinical Specialist in Physical Therapy
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