



## **Update on Foreign Educated Issues in Oregon**

*This article is based on a presentation by James D. Heider, Executive Director, Oregon Physical Therapist Licensing Board, as part of a panel discussion at the 2014 FSBPT annual meeting.*

Seeing the difficulty that Foreign Education Physical Therapists (FEPTs) had in becoming licensed in the U.S., the Oregon PT Board expedited the credentialing process for them.

The impetus was because of a qualified Indian candidate who had a current, unencumbered license in another state and 15 years current U.S. clinical experience. The candidate was an outpatient program director of a PT/OT clinic.

Problems arose because the candidate's PT school and school records in India had been destroyed, and they could not meet the Oregon credentialing criteria. Eventually the candidate went to work for the Veterans Administration in Oregon since the VA only requires a current license in one state.

Existing statute said that in addition to meeting all the other endorsement qualifications and requirements noted in the statute, applicants educated outside the U.S. must:

- Provide evidence that foreign PT education is substantially equivalent to that of a U.S. graduate.
- Demonstrate proficiency in English if required by the board
- FSBPT Coursework Tool (CWT) completed specifically for the State of Oregon, stating "Substantially Equivalent."
- English Language Proficiency qualifying TOEFL (Test Of English as a Foreign Language) scores.
- Verification of foreign license if applicable.

The Oregon board went back and re-wrote their rules for an Expedited Credentialing Process with Qualifying U.S. Clinical Experience. It included:

- Certified copy of previous CWT done for another state stating "Substantially Equivalent."
- Employer verification of qualifying clinical experience.

- Employer statement of safe and competent practice.
- Qualifying Work Experience is defined as 1,000 hours of clinical practice in three of the last 10 years with no more than a five-year lapse since the last clinical experience.

The benefits were an expedited process that saved time and resources, shaving months down to weeks. It reduced the cost to applicants; did not require the retake of the TOEFL, and thus there was more immediate access to care for the public.

However, benefits do not always come without concerns.

Some of the issues were:

- Validity of employer statements if applicant is self-employed
- Credentialers/boards records retention and records release policies
- CWT that does not state “Substantially Equivalent,” but is coupled with remedial work, can allow the board to grant a license.

Resolution was that Oregon could begin to use:

- Copies of appointment books, work schedules, and payroll records
- Attestations from peers or colleagues, referral sources, patients and payers
- Documentation of remedial work from a previous licensing authority or primary source



**James D. Heider, Executive Director, Oregon Physical Therapist Licensing Board**

In 2003, Jim left the private sector to accept a position in the public sector as Executive Director for the Oregon Physical Therapist Licensing Board. Per an Oregon Board directive, Jim became involved with the Federation. Over the past several years he has served on numerous task forces and committees. In recognition of his accomplishments and contributions, in 2006, the Federation awarded Jim an Outstanding Service Award; in 2009 he was awarded the President’s Award and, in 2010, he again was recognized with another Outstanding Service Award. Jim’s commitment and achievements, both with the Oregon board and the Federation, were the preface to his appointment to the Federation Board of Directors where he completed his first full term in September 2014.