



College Connection Builds Practice, Student Confidence

Looking to populate your practice with top talent? Try going back to school.

Troy, New York, physical therapist Joseph G. Maccio Sr., MA, PT, Dip. MDT, connected with a nearby college a few years ago, a move that has produced benefits for pupils

and practice owners alike.

“For me, it’s not just about finding staff, but finding really good staff,” Maccio says. “When you’ve got a good staff, it’s a lot of fun.”

Initially, Sage College School of Health Sciences faculty approached him about guest lecturing. Maccio has practiced the McKenzie Method® of Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy® (MDT) for more than two decades. He delivered a couple lectures and led a lab to broaden the students’ PT perspective.

That arrangement grew into a program that allows students to do postgraduate work while still in school. The aspiring physical therapists must complete McKenzie’s Part A course that covers treatment of the lumbar spine. They also complete Part B (cervical and thoracic spine) before leaving with their Sage diploma.

“It’s extra work, so these are students who are (motivated),” Maccio says. “As a result, we’re getting the cream of the crop from these classes.”

Maccio, who runs his MDT-certified practice with his son Joe Jr. (also Dip. MDT), takes on eight students for clinical internships each year. Already armed with Part A, they make a great fit on his staff – in some cases, permanently.

“They’re trained and they’re here anywhere from eight to 12 weeks,” he says. “They’re reading a lot of research; they’re also potentially publishing articles.”

That’s a significant prospect for a student. Joe Jr. and one former intern just earned author credits on the first-ever MDT elbow study in the *Journal for Manual and Manipulative Therapy* (JMMT). It took two years of work, precisely the type of commitment Maccio looks for when hiring.

“We now have a steady employment stream coming in. We never have to advertise again,” he says. Nearly all of his five-person staff are certified in MDT, with two of them waiting to sit for the credentialing exam that follows Part C (advanced lumbar spine and lower limb extremities) and D (advanced cervical and thoracic spine and upper limb extremities) courses.

Maccio brings these MDT courses and their instructors to the college, another great benefit of the relationship. The postgraduate study is open to all physical therapists in the area. Typically, about half of the 40 or so attendees are Sage students.

“There are not many schools that do this – we’re one of just a handful nationally,” Maccio says.

He says students are attracted to the simplicity and speedy outcomes the McKenzie Method tends to produce.

The evidence-based MDT clinical assessment and management system begins with a thorough mechanical analysis to establish a "cause-and-effect" relationship between historical pain behavior as well as the response to repeated test movements, positions and activities.

A systematic progression of applied mechanical forces utilizes pain response to monitor changes in motion and function to classify the disorder. Clinicians then develop a treatment program that empowers patients to treat themselves when possible.

Maccio's practice of the method makes the Sage program possible. MDT practitioners anywhere can take a few steps to establish a recruitment pipeline of their own, he says.

- Approach a local physical therapy program about doing guest lectures.
- Make arrangements to bring McKenzie courses to campus.
- Establish a program for clinical interns.

The benefits work both ways, encouraging extended education and offering research opportunities to students while building a practice.

Visit The McKenzie Institute® USA [website](#) for more information about the method, free resources and course information.