

# Q&A With Joseph Schenk, Hand Therapy Fellow

## Joseph Schenk, OTR/L

- **Undergraduate school:** York College of Pennsylvania, bachelor's in behavioral science
- **Graduate school:** Sacred Heart University, master's in occupational therapy
- **Hometown:** Ellicott City, Maryland
- **Fellowship completion year:** [hand therapy fellowship](#), 2018



## Why did you decide to pursue a fellowship in hand therapy?

I always have been interested in hand therapy, however, it was hard to get my foot in the door as a newer therapist in this specialized field. Once I found out that Jyo Supnekar started the Johns Hopkins Hand Therapy Fellowship and was welcoming new graduates, I could not pass up the opportunity to apply.

## Why did you choose the fellowship program at Johns Hopkins?

I grew up in Maryland and always had high respect for Johns Hopkins as one of the best hospitals in the world. I thought there would be no better place to learn and grow as a therapist.

## What were your general responsibilities as a hand therapy fellow?

- Maintain a daily full caseload of 8-10 patients with typically one evaluation.
- Develop an evidence-based protocol for three common conditions seen at Johns Hopkins in hand therapy.
- Participate in monthly journal readings and online discussion board postings.
- Prepare weekly mentor sessions along with weekly readings in hand therapy literature.
- 

## What was your caseload like and what kinds of patient populations did you work with?

I saw patients with a variety of conditions, including postoperative trauma of tendon, bone and ligament; fractures; and nerve repair through the entire upper extremity. I also saw patients for chronic/conservative treatment of conditions stemming from overuse or past trauma.

## Name some important things you've learned from your mentors in the program.

I learned to always listen to each mentor, and try to apply each lesson when appropriate to the next patient. I also learned to never assume anything when evaluating or treating a patient, to listen to a patient's response — positive or negative — and thoroughly prepare for treatment with evidence-based knowledge.

## Were there activities outside work that helped you make friends and maintain work-life balance?

So many opportunities! There was a volunteering health fair in the fall where I represented Johns Hopkins at White Marsh outpatient center. We also attended the Philadelphia Hand Therapy and National Hand Therapy conferences and weekly hand surgery conferences, where we learned about surgical interventions and got a chance to educate on the benefits of hand therapy. Lastly, there was a monthly hand surgery and therapy networking event provided by the Curtis Hand Center that involved reviewing articles during a happy hour and meal.

## How has this program helped you grow professionally so far?

It has helped me build a foundation of knowledge in hand therapy to continue to practice in the field.

## Any advice you would give to someone interested in this program?

Always be open to constructive feedback and mentor sessions, as it will only help you be a better therapist and professional.

## Anything else you would like to share?

I want to thank Jyo Supnekar for taking so much time and effort to start the Johns Hopkins Hand Therapy Fellowship. I also want to thank each of my mentors: Jyo Supnekar, Dawn Kutcher, Princess Filippi and Maria Rothenheber for taking time to teach me the principles and skills of hand therapy and always being patient with understanding my strengths and weaknesses. Lastly, I want to thank the entire Johns Hopkins Rehabilitation Network for always answering any questions or assisting me when I needed it most!