

# Physical Therapy: What, Who, How

CVMA - February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**Dr. James M. Syms PT, DSc, ATC, SCS**

*Physical Therapist, Doctor of Science (Physical Therapy),*

*Certified Athletic Trainer,*

*Board Certified Specialist-Sports Physical Therapy*

**President, California Physical Therapy Association**

**Assistant Professor, Loma Linda University**

## Discussion Focus

- What is Physical Therapy?
- Who are the licensed practitioners that are allowed to conduct the lawful practice of physical therapy and what are their educational requirements?
  - Physical Therapist
  - Physical Therapist Assistant

## Discussion Focus

- What constitutes lawful practice:
  - What are Physical Therapists educated to do.

**versus**

  - What they are allowed to do? (i.e., scope of practice)
- What are the requirements that Physical Therapist must meet to conduct themselves within “standard of practice”.

## Discussion Focus

- When is it appropriate to consult a physical therapist?
  - How can a patient/client access/obtain the services of a physical therapist?
  - Do patients need a referral (and from whom) to seek physical therapy services?
  - What information is necessary (should be included from the physician) in the referral?

## Vision Statement

- By 2020, physical therapy will be provided by physical therapists who are doctors of physical therapy, recognized by consumers and other health care professionals as the practitioners of choice to whom consumers have direct access for ...

## Vision Statement

... the diagnosis of,  
interventions for,  
and prevention of

- a) Impairments,
- b) Functional Limitations,
- c) Disabilities

related to movement, function, and health.

## What is Physical Therapy

*California Business & Professions Code 2620*

- (a) Physical therapy means the art and science of physical or corrective rehabilitation or of physical or corrective treatment of any bodily or mental condition of any person by the use of the physical, chemical, and other properties of heat, ...

## What is Physical Therapy

*California Business & Professions Code 2620*

... light, water, electricity, sound, massage, and active, passive, and resistive exercise, and shall include **physical therapy evaluation**, treatment planning, instruction and consultative services.

## What is Physical Therapy

*California Business & Professions Code 2620*

The practice of physical therapy includes the promotion and maintenance of physical fitness to enhance the **bodily movement related health and wellness** of individuals through the use of physical therapy interventions.

## What is Physical Therapy

*California Business & Professions Code 2620.7.*

- (a) A physical therapist shall document **his or her evaluation**, goals, treatment plan, and summary of treatment in the patient record.

*So what does this mean?*

Physical therapists are **"autonomous practitioners"**.

The PT is solely responsible for their practice activities conducted under their license.

## What is Physical Therapy

*California Code of Regulations Title 16 Division 13.2*

- **1399.85. Patient Records**  
A physical therapist shall document in the patient record the following:
  - (1) **Examination and re-examination**
  - (2) **Evaluation**, when the patient is to be reevaluated and the reevaluation
  - (3) **Diagnosis**
  - (4) **Prognosis and intervention**
  - (5) **Treatment plan** and modification of the plan of care
  - (6) Each treatment provided
  - (7) Discharge Summary

- Note: Authority cited: Section 2615, Business and Professions Code. Reference: Section 2620.7, Business and Professions Code.  
HISTORY  
1. New section filed 1-6-2003; operative 2-5-2003 (Register 2003, No. 2).

## Who/What are Physical Therapists

- There are two practitioners who are lawfully permitted to practice physical therapy:

**1) Physical Therapist (PT)**

**2) Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA)**

The **PTA** may only participate in the physical therapy interventions for our patients while **under the specific directive of the physical therapist**.

## Who/What are Physical Therapists

- All physical therapists must be licensed. (as opposed to certified, approved, or registered).
- All 50 state jurisdictions (and two additional jurisdictions – District of Colombia and Puerto Rico) have licensure requirements for physical therapists.
- No such thing as a non-licensed PT.

## Who/What are Physical Therapists

California Business & Professions Code 2630

It is **unlawful for any person or persons to practice, or offer to practice, physical therapy** in this state for compensation received or expected, or to hold himself or herself out as a physical therapist, **unless at the time of so doing the person holds a valid, unexpired, and unrevoked license** issued under this chapter.

***In other words, only a physical therapist can administer/conduct physical therapy.***

## Who/What are Physical Therapists

CA Business & Professions Code 2622

"Physical therapist" and "physical therapist technician" mean a person who is licensed pursuant to this chapter to practice physical therapy. For purposes of this chapter, the term **"physical therapy" and "physiotherapy" shall be deemed identical and interchangeable.**

## Who/What are Physical Therapists

- What is the level of education required to be licensed as a PT?
  - All physical therapists must be a graduate from an accredited PT professional program.
  - As of 1990, all accredited PT programs must be at the post-baccalaureate (i.e., Masters, or Doctoral degree level).
  - Currently ALL PT programs of physical therapy are at or are transitioning to the Doctorate level. Accreditation standards are such that a doctoral level degree is now required.

## Who/What are Physical Therapists

- What is the course of instruction/curriculum for PT education?
  - Essentially a "4+3" matriculation.
  - Four year undergraduate (pre-PT) major followed with a three year professional program (**Doctor of Physical Therapy**) curriculum.

**Analogous to other doctoral level health care practitioners –**  
**i.e., Physicians, Dentists, Chiropractors, Optometrists, and Podiatrists**

## Who/What are Physical Therapists

- Average length of professional curriculum of DPT program is 118.4 weeks.
- On average, DPT programs require 239 credit hours
  - 114 pre-professional credit hours
  - 124 professional credit hours
    - 90 classroom/lab
    - 24 clinical education

### Who/What are Physical Therapists

Specific courses in PT professional education (LLU) include:

Anatomy	Pharmacology
Pathology x 2	Histology
Physiology x 2	Neuroanatomy x2
Kinesiology	Clinical Neurology
Biostatistics x 2	Infectious Disease

### Who/What are Physical Therapists

Specific courses in PT professional education (LLU) include:

Therapeutic Exercise x 3	Hand Rehabilitation
Neurology x 5	General Medicine x 2
Pediatrics x 2	Geriatrics x 2
Clinical Psychiatry	Differential Diagnosis
Orthopaedics x 6	Clinical Imaging
Locomotion Studies (Gait)	

### Who/What are Physical Therapists

- Are there specialty areas that physical therapists specialize and can be certified?

There are eight areas of specialization a physical therapist may be certified:

- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| - Orthopaedics               | - Sports ( <b>SCS</b> ) |
| - Geriatrics                 | - Pediatrics            |
| - Neurological               | - Woman's Health        |
| - Clinical Electrophysiology |                         |
| - Cardiovascular & Pulmonary |                         |

Suggested referral patterns for physical therapy or medical consultation.

- PT Diagnosis = **impairment** identification  
vs
- Medical Diagnosis = **pathology** identification

Referral pattern can be initiated by either practitioner.

### Suggested referral patterns for physical therapist consultation.

Whereas in **physical therapy**, we are **impairment based**;

in medicine, **physician's activity** is **pathology based**.

This means we speak slightly different languages, and we view the patient through slightly different glasses.

***Nevertheless, regardless of what we call it or how we see it; we both have the patient's best interest in mind.***

### Suggested referral patterns for physical therapist consultation.

- **IMPAIRMENTS:**

- Joint Mobility	- Posture
- Sensory Integrity	- Balance
- Motor Function	- Endurance
- Muscle Performance	- Pain
- ROM	- Coordination
- Gait-Locomotion	

**If any patient presents with any of the impairments identified above, a physical therapy consult is indicated.**

How:  
Are PT Services Accessed

- In Nineteen (19) jurisdictions and in the military model of health care, patients/clients have direct access to physical therapy services.
- In California, patients/clients have access to physical therapists for evaluation.

How:  
Are Physical Therapists Supervised

- Physician (MD) – No supervision
- Osteopath (DO) – No supervision
- Podiatrist (DPM) – No supervision
- Chiropractor (DC) – No supervision
- Dentist (DDS, DDM) – No supervision

**In no instances in the health care delivery system are physical therapists under supervision of any other practitioner.**

Doctoring Health Care Professions

- Dentist (DDS, DDM)
- Chiropractor (DC)
- Osteopath (DO)
- Physical Therapist (DPT)
- Physician (MD)
- Podiatrist (DPM)

**All of the doctoring professions work in a collaborative (not hierarchical) effort in the best interest of the patient/client.**

**“The best interest of the patient is the only interest to be considered”**

- Dr. William J. Mayo

Animal Rehabilitation:  
Interested/Involved Parties

**Special Interests**

- CPTA
- CAAPT
- APTA
- CVMA
- AVMA
- CEVRA

**Licensing Boards**

- PTBC
- VMB

**Legislative Branch**

- Senate
- Assembly

**Executive Branch**

- Office of Admin. Law
- Admin. Law Judge
- Governor's Office

What's Next

Scholarly analysis of the situation to eventually produce an outcome that serves the patient's (animal and animal owner's) needs and best interests.

Consumer protection - NOT income stream protection, nor the advancement of a special interest group.

Fair, objective (evidence based when possible), collaborative, and transparent.