

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE

SECTION 2620-2622 and 2650

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, light, water, electricity, sound, massage, and active, passive, and resistive exercise, and shall include physical therapy evaluation, treatment planning, instruction and consultative services. 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. The use of roentgen rays and radioactive materials, for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes, and the use of electricity for surgical purposes, including cauterization, are not authorized under the term "physical therapy" as used in this chapter, and a license issued pursuant to this chapter does not authorize the diagnosis of disease.

(b) Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict or prohibit other healing arts practitioners licensed or registered under this division from practice within the scope of their license or registration.

2620.3. A physical therapist licensed pursuant to this chapter may apply topical medications as part of the practice of physical therapy as defined in Section 2620 if he or she complies with regulations duly adopted by the board pursuant to this section and the Administrative Procedure Act. The board shall adopt regulations implementing this section after meeting and conferring with the Medical Board of California and the California State Board of Pharmacy specifying those topical medications applicable to the practice of physical therapy and protocols for their use. Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize a physical therapist to prescribe medications.

2620.5. A physical therapist may, upon specified authorization of a physician and surgeon, perform tissue penetration for the purpose of evaluating neuromuscular performance as a part of the practice of physical therapy, as defined in Section 2620, provided the physical therapist is certified by the board to perform the tissue penetration and evaluation and provided the physical therapist does not develop or make diagnostic or prognostic interpretations of the data obtained. Any physical therapist who develops or makes a diagnostic or prognostic interpretation of this data is in violation of the Medical Practice Act (Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 2000) of Division 2), and may be subject to all of the sanctions and penalties set forth in that act.

The board, after meeting and conferring with the Division of Licensing of the Medical Board of California, shall do all of the following:

(a) Adopt standards and procedures for tissue penetration for the purpose of evaluating neuromuscular performance by certified physical therapists.

(b) Establish standards for physical therapists to perform tissue penetration for the purpose of evaluating neuromuscular performance.

(c) Certify physical therapists meeting standards established by the board pursuant to this section.

2620.7. (a) A physical therapist shall document his or her evaluation, goals, treatment plan, and summary of treatment in the patient record.

(b) A physical therapist shall document the care actually provided to a patient in the patient record.

(c) A physical therapist shall sign the patient record legibly.

(d) Patient records shall be maintained for a period of no less than seven years following the discharge of the patient, except that the records of unemancipated minors shall be maintained at least one year after the minor has reached the age of 18 years, and not in any case less than seven years.

2621. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as authorizing a physical therapist to practice medicine, surgery, or any other form of healing except as authorized by Section 2620.

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.

2650. (a) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, each applicant for a license as a physical therapist shall be a graduate of a professional degree program of an accredited postsecondary institution or institutions approved by the board, and shall have completed a professional education including academic coursework and clinical internship in physical therapy.

(b) As referenced in the evaluative criteria of the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education of the American Physical Therapy Association, the curriculum shall consist of a combination of didactic, clinical, and research experiences in physical therapy using critical thinking and weighing of evidence, and shall include, at a minimum, all of the following:

(1) The sciences basic to physical therapy including biomedical, physical, physiological, neurobiological, anatomical, social and behavioral sciences.

(2) Clinical sciences including laboratory or other practical experiences involving quantitative and qualitative evaluation within the scope of physical therapy practice including kinesiology, neuroscience, pathology, human development, and gerontology.

(3) Treatment that constitutes the practice of physical therapy.

(4) Learning experiences provided in the areas of administration, education, and consultation.

(5) Research methods including the review and critical analysis of research reports.

(6) Ethical, legal, and economical concepts of physical therapy practice.

(c) Each applicant shall have at least 18 weeks of full-time clinical experience with a variety of patients.