



Last Updated: 09/20/19
Contact: nationalgovernance@apta.org

PHYSICAL THERAPISTS' ROLE IN PREVENTION, WELLNESS, FITNESS, HEALTH PROMOTION, AND MANAGEMENT OF DISEASE AND DISABILITY HOD P06-19-27-12 [Amended: HOD P06-16-06-05; Initial: HOD P06-15-23-15]

[Position]

Physical therapists play a unique role in society in prevention, wellness, fitness, health promotion, and management of disease and disability by serving as a dynamic bridge between health and health services delivery for individuals and populations. This means that although physical therapists are experts in rehabilitation and habilitation, they also have the expertise and the opportunity to help individuals and populations improve overall health and avoid preventable health conditions. Physical therapists' roles may include education, direct intervention, research, advocacy, and collaborative consultation. These roles are essential to the profession's vision of transforming society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience.

Physical therapists, like most health professionals, are educated to provide services in the health services delivery environment. Physical therapists also are uniquely educated and trained to adapt health recommendations to the community environment where individuals live, work, learn, and play. Importantly, physical therapists consider and account for the social determinants of health in the provision of clinical and community services. This knowledge and ability enables physical therapists to adapt medical recommendations to specific environments, to meaningfully interpret health recommendations, to create targeted approaches to help individuals modify their health behaviors, and to ensure clinical and community services are integrated, available, and mutually reinforcing.

For their role in prevention, wellness, fitness, and health promotion, physical therapists:

1. Integrate decision-making skills across all dimensions and contextual factors of the *International Classification of Function*
2. Incorporate health history into a plan of care that includes data related to body functions and structures, activities and participation, and relevant personal and environmental factors, including social determinants of health (economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, neighborhood, and built environment)
3. Integrate scientific principles of movement, function, and exercise progression to promote physical activity and improve health outcomes for individuals and populations
4. Incorporate concepts of prevention, wellness, fitness, and health promotion with every patient or client as appropriate
5. Integrate and interpret the elements of medical, biopsychosocial, and health promotion models that allow them to monitor health status over time
6. Design and develop integrated clinical and community screening programs to prevent and manage disease and disability, and refer as appropriate, as part of a community-based integrated team that is focused on healthy lifestyles
7. Apply the best available evidence in selecting and prescribing exercise for individuals, and planning physical activity and injury prevention programs for individuals and communities

8. Use skills in behavior change to promote healthy lifestyles in individuals and communities
9. Adapt tasks and the environment to promote healthy behaviors and improved health outcomes for individuals and populations of all ages, including those with complex health and functional needs, as part of a community-based integrated team
10. Adopt healthy lifestyle choices for themselves that include engaging in active forms of transportation and meeting national guidelines for participation in physical activity and exercise

For their role in management of disease and disability, physical therapists:

1. Recognize the risk factors for, and the course of, chronic diseases and the potential impact on quality of life and on activities and participation
2. Establish and facilitate collaborative, interprofessional, patient- and client-centric relationships that empower individuals and populations in self-management across the lifespan and through the health continuum, with an emphasis on movement and function
3. Apply best available evidence in selecting, prescribing, and using intervention and measurement strategies to establish exercise prescription for individuals to help them prevent primary, secondary, and tertiary conditions or optimize functional mobility
4. Apply best available evidence in planning programs to educate populations to help them prevent primary, secondary, and tertiary conditions or restore functional mobility
5. Provide nonsurgical and nonpharmacological services as a hallmark of physical therapist practice
6. Predict and interpret health outcomes and functional needs in the context of where people live, work, learn, and play

For their role as a dynamic link between health and health services delivery, physical therapists:

1. Apply their expertise in exercise and physical activity to adapt health recommendations for individuals and populations, from clinical settings to the home and community
2. Function as a member of an interprofessional team of health providers, wellness and fitness providers, community health workers, public health providers, and other diverse professionals to help individuals and populations reduce their disease risk and improve their health and quality of life
3. Communicate and collaborate with relevant health professionals to help individuals and populations receive appropriate health services

For their role as advocates for prevention, wellness, fitness, health promotion, and management of disease and disability, physical therapists:

1. Support scientific, educational, legislative, and other policy initiatives that promote regular physical activity and exercise to enhance health and prevent disease
2. Advocate for physical education, physical conditioning, and wellness instruction at all levels of education, from preschool through higher education
3. Advocate for community design that promotes opportunities for safe physical activity and active forms of transportation for individuals and populations of all ages and abilities
4. Advocate for strategies that reduce inequities and barriers related to social determinants of health

Explanation of Reference Numbers:

HOD P00-00-00-00 stands for House of Delegates/month/year/page/vote in the House of Delegates minutes; the "P" indicates that it is a position (see below). For example, HOD P06-17-05-04 means that this position can be found in the June 2017 House of Delegates minutes on Page 5 and that it was Vote 4.

P: Position | S: Standard | G: Guideline | Y: Policy | R: Procedure