



PHYSICAL THERAPY FOR OLDER ADULTS HOD P06-06-08-04 [Amended HOD P06-02-20-04; Amended HOD 06-95-15-08; Initial HOD 06-87-09-16] [Position]

The American health care delivery system should provide the services required by the expanding older adult segment of our population. Appropriate interventions enable the older adult to maintain or regain physical, physiological, and social well being. Quality of life for older adults may be enhanced by health professionals who have specific knowledge about: the aging process, appropriate therapeutic interventions, environmental factors and health care and social support systems.

Prompt and coordinated services provided by health professionals can help to avoid hospitalization, decrease the length of institutional stay, reduce the amount of care required after discharge, prevent complications, and improve the individual's level of functioning. Successful intervention contributes to diminishing the physical, psychological, and socioeconomic burdens experienced by many older adults.

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) urges legislative and regulatory bodies to promote appropriate utilization of physical therapy services by adopting the following principles:

1. Physical therapists across primary, secondary, and tertiary care settings promote, enhance and maintain optimal health, wellness, and fitness as well as prevent or slow the progression of impairments in body structures and function, activity limitations, or participation restrictions.
2. Optimal service delivery incorporates patient/client values, including preferences regarding choice of provider and site of service.
3. Health, wellness, and fitness for the older adult should be supported to prevent or delay the development of impairments in body structures and function, activity limitations, or participation restrictions and changes in health status that often result in the utilization of more costly services.
4. Functional assessment by physical therapists is essential in determining the needs of the older adult population and monitoring the outcomes of services to ensure optimal quality of life as it relates to movement and health.
5. Home and community environments should be evaluated by physical therapists to prevent accidents and falls. Appropriate physical therapy services to eliminate or reduce environmental, home, and work barriers should be implemented and reimbursed.
6. Arbitrary restrictions, especially referral requirements, that impede availability of, access to, or reimbursement for physical therapy services should be eliminated.
7. Physical therapy services should be accessible and available to all older adults including those in rural, low income, unserved, and under-served areas.
8. The patient/client management elements of examination, evaluation, diagnosis, and prognosis should be represented and reimbursed as physical therapy only when they are performed by a physical therapist. Physical therapists are the only professionals who provide physical therapy interventions. Physical therapist assistants are the only individuals who

provide selected physical therapy interventions under the direction and supervision of the physical therapist. Interventions should be represented and reimbursed as physical therapy only when they are provided by physical therapists or physical therapist assistants under the direction and supervision of physical therapists.

Relationship to Vision 2020: Practitioner of Choice; (Practice Department, ext 3176)

[Document updated: 02/03/2011]

Explanation of Reference Numbers:

BOD P00-00-00-00 stands for Board of Directors/month/year/page/vote in the Board of Directors Minutes; the "P" indicates that it is a position (see below). For example, BOD P11-97-06-18 means that this position can be found in the November 1997 Board of Directors minutes on Page 6 and that it was Vote 18.

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