



PHYSICAL THERAPIST OF RECORD AND “HAND OFF” COMMUNICATION HOD P06-08-16-16 [Position]

Whereas, Research has identified medical errors in all practice areas as a direct result of failures in communication^{1,2};

Whereas, Models to reduce errors related to communication have been evaluated, and evidence demonstrates that implementation strategies have successfully reduced errors related to poor communication¹;

Whereas, Current communication practices have been recognized by accrediting agencies as an area of opportunity for improvement in patient/client safety, as exemplified by Goal 2 of the National Patient Safety Goals of The Joint Commission (TJC), to “improve the effectiveness of communication among caregivers”¹;

Whereas, TJC further clarifies communication effectiveness by adding in Goal 2E the requirement “to implement a standardized approach to “hand off” communications, including an opportunity to ask and respond to questions”¹;

Whereas, Physical therapists assume responsibility and accept accountability for patient/client management;

Whereas, Identifying the physical therapist of record and implementing a “hand off” communications process are essential in meeting the responsibility of patient/client management; and

Whereas, Recognizing that the physical therapist or physical therapist assistant providing care may change within a setting or institution, establishing a physical therapist of record and ensuring effective “hand off” communication help to ensure that the plan of care is continued and advanced in a manner that best benefits the patient/client;

Resolved, The physical therapist of record is the therapist who assumes primary responsibility for patient/client management and as such is held accountable for the coordination, continuation, and progression of the plan of care;

Resolved, That the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) encourages practices and facilities to develop and implement a process to identify the physical therapist of record and “hand off” communication procedures; and

Resolved, That APTA shall incorporate the concepts of physical therapist of record and “hand off” communication into appropriate Association documents.

1. 2008 National Patient Safety Goals. The Joint Commission Web site. Available at: <http://www.jointcommission.org/PatientSafety/NationalPatientSafetyGoals/>. Accessed March 24, 2008.
2. Kohn LT, Corrigan JM, Donaldson MS, eds: Committee on Quality of Health Care in America, Institute of Medicine. *To Err Is Human: Building a Safer Health System*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2000.

[Document updated: 12/14/2009]

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