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 communication\(^3\);

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”\(^4\);

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.


Relationship to Vision 2020: Professionalism; (Practice Department, ext 3176)

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.