

THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL THERAPY IN SAFE PATIENT HANDLING HOD P06-12-21-20 [Position]

Whereas, Safe Patient Handling refers to policies and programs that enable health care workers to move patients and clients in a way that does not cause strain or injury. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recommends that manual lifting of patients be minimized in all cases and eliminated when feasible and that employers should put an effective ergonomics process in place that provides management, involves employees, identifies problems, implements solutions, addresses injury reports, provides training, and evaluates ergonomic efforts;¹ and,

Whereas, Physical therapists (PTs) and physical therapist assistants (PTAs) are experts in concepts involving rehabilitation and prevention of injury and strain to the neuromusculoskeletal system, fall prevention, and utilizing technology to facilitate optimum patient outcomes while maintaining patient and caregiver safety. In addition, PTs and PTAs are uniquely positioned to best evaluate appropriate use of new technologies as to when they may be optimally applied to prevent injuries and facilitate functional recovery.

Resolved, The American Physical Therapy Association endorses the following concepts:

- Physical therapists (PT) and physical therapist assistants (PTA) should be involved and should be leaders throughout development, implementation, refinement and maintenance of Safe Patient Handling programs on an institutional level and at the local, state and federal government levels
- PTs and PTAs shall lead by example, appropriately supporting and employing the concepts of Safe Patient Handling during patient care
- PTs and PTAs should be leaders in multidisciplinary Safe Patient Handling training programming to expand the Safe Patient Handling knowledge and resources of the multidisciplinary health care team

Resolved, The American Physical Therapy Association endorses the following concepts:

- PTs shall have the clinical autonomy to apply Safe Patient Handling concepts when most appropriate, based on patient/client presentation
- PTAs shall have the ability to apply problem solving during patient care to incorporate appropriate Safe Patient Handling concepts
- PTs and PTAs should have appropriate access to a variety of safe patient handling equipment in their clinical practice
- Physical therapy departments should have appropriate policies and training in Safe Patient Handling procedures.

1. Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Nursing Homes and Personal Care Facilities Web site. <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/nursinghome/index.html>. Accessed April 23, 2012.

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