GUIDELINES: ASSOCIATION INVOLVEMENT IN RESEARCH  BOD G03-01-20-69 [Initial BOD 06-91-12-42] [Guideline]

BACKGROUND
Research is a major component of our society and is essential within the health professions. Research embodies the development of questions, the seeking of information, the formulation of change and the identification of future needs and directions. Within the health professions, research is extremely diverse in scope, ranging from basic research on molecular, cellular and physiology processes, through clinical research to develop and test new clinical procedures, to research to understand the health system, patient/client behaviors and professional education and training. There is a rapidly increasing recognition of the importance of research to the growth of physical therapy and a corresponding rise in the involvement of physical therapists in research studies. This will enable the profession to expand its base for improving the quality and effectiveness of the clinical services it offers to society and to strengthen its role within the health care community.

A major portion of research is undertaken as "investigator initiated" studies. In this case, an investigator or group of investigators identify a knowledge and/or technology gap; develop a hypothesis, questions, aims and methods; implement the study and analyze results; and, disseminate findings to the professional communities. Such efforts are the foundation for advancement in the health professions as well as in other fields.

Although associations may undertake research efforts within the investigator initiated model, they also pursue investigations focused on understanding the environment in which they and their members operate. In this regard, research may be undertaken as a basis for strategic planning and policy formulation and may be considered "proprietary" research. The nature of this type of association research can vary, ranging from market research, membership surveys and to the level of structured and sophisticated data collection and analysis efforts.

The level of association participation in a research effort also may vary. In some cases studies are undertaken solely by association staff. Other efforts may be initiated by staff in collaboration with members and/or non-member consultants. Finally, studies may be implemented entirely by researchers outside the organization. Association funding of studies may range from full financial and resource support of an effort, through collaborative funding with another agency or organization, to seeking full financial support from an external funding source.

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), representing the physical therapy profession, also recognizes the importance of research as a basis for understanding the needs of society and the profession, and as a foundation for its strategic planning and policy development. Although APTA is not a research funding agency, there may be opportunities to and needs for initiating and supporting research efforts.

In order to adequately implement such efforts, APTA’s Board of Directors (BOD) has developed guidelines for planning, budgeting and presenting proposed efforts to the Board. These guidelines also include provisions for collaboration with member and non-member collaborators and considerations for the review of Association "proprietary" data that will be used in strategic planning and policy decisions.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS AS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT
Research: primary or secondary data collection; analysis and/or interpretation efforts that deal with issues including, but not limited to: treatment efficacy, effectiveness or outcomes of clinical practice/care; cost effectiveness of procedures or practice; human resource issues related to physical therapy services (e.g., number, distribution, education/training, specialization) and access to care. Research undertaken and/or
supported by the Association which focuses on obtaining information to be used in strategic planning and/or policy development may be referred to as "proprietary research."

Organizational Research: studies focusing on the structure and administration of APTA. Market Research: studies of member product/service needs; analysis of the number, type, content and pricing of products/services that may be relevant to APTA and/or its members. These guidelines may not be applicable to such efforts.

Association Involvement: APTA financial support of studies, in whole or in part; use of APTA data and/or databases in the conduct of research; involvement of APTA staff in any part of the design, implementation and/or analysis of research. This does not include APTA staff review of results and/or manuscripts/reports of research undertaken by others.

Association "Owned" Data: information, data and/or databases that have been collected and/or are maintained by the Association; information/data collected by a consultant on behalf of the Association and under agreement with the Association (if the agreement specifies that the data will become the property of APTA).

GENERAL GUIDELINES

• Any research effort supported by involving APTA must be undertaken under the general principles of scientific integrity and honesty, and in accordance with the Association's Code of Ethics and the Association's Guidelines for Promoting Integrity in Research (Program 52). Under no conditions will APTA limit or delay dissemination of findings that in any way jeopardize the safety of society.

• Research efforts should be identified as part of the Association's strategic planning process. As such, efforts should be related to goals, objectives and priorities of the Association. Further, strategies/activities to undertake research efforts should be included in annual plans and budgets submitted to the Board of Directors for review and approval in November of each year.

• The presentation of research proposals to the Board of Directors (or Executive Committee) should clearly and concisely outline the following:
  1. Purpose of the study
  2. Specific aims or objectives
  3. General approach/methods (including staffing and external consultants)
  4. Potential implications for the study; relationship to Association issues/policies; identification of any areas of sensitivity
  5. Plans for dissemination of findings and future use of data collected (see next guideline)
  6. Plans to submit an application/proposal for funding from external agencies (government or private).

• The description of plans for disseminating findings and future use of collected data should delineate "ownership" of data and any special considerations related to release of or access to data by members or others. If results are expected to be submitted for publication, the publications/journals to which manuscripts are likely to be sent should be identified. The guidelines or provisions for authorship of publications, and how APTA will be acknowledged in these publications should be described.

• Any special provisions for or restrictions on the dissemination of findings from studies financially supported entirely by APTA and considered proprietary should be delineated during the planning and proposal development phase of the study and clearly identified by the Board of Directors during their review of annual plans/budgets. Provisions/restrictions may be identified by the Board of Directors when the study may affect or shape Association policy. In such cases, the Board of Directors may request that a special group be appointed to review findings prior to dissemination. Any collaborators/consultants will be apprised of these limitations/provisions in writing as a part of a letter of agreement (see next guideline).
• Special considerations for and/or limitations on the access to and use of data collected through research efforts supported entirely by the Association and/or "owned" by the Association should be delineated in the planning and proposal development for a study. These provisions will be considered by the Board of Directors.

The following guideline is applicable when a research study is entirely funded by APTA or when a study is funded by an external agency and the Association is sponsoring institution/prime contractor:

• If the study will involve member or non-member collaborators or consultants in the design, implementation, analysis or interpretation of the study, the role of these individuals will be clearly delineated in a letter of agreement between the Association and these individuals. This letter will include the role of the individual/group in the project, data use and access, and role in the preparation of publications or other vehicles for disseminating the study findings.

• Applications/proposals to be submitted to external funding agencies, with APTA serving as the sponsoring institution, prime contractor or as a subcontractor, must be reviewed for scientific and technical merit prior to submission to the agency by the Senior Director, Research, and other appropriate staff, Board of Directors and/or members. Financial review will be undertaken by the Chief Executive Officer and COO. In accordance with the policy of the Board of Directors (Grants and Contracts), all grant and contract submissions shall be approved by the Treasurer and the President, or their designees before submission.

• The Association recognizes that for any research supported in whole or in part by an external funding agency, the Association will abide by the policies and guidelines of that agency, including those relating to ownership of/access to data generated, and to dissemination of research findings.

The following guidelines pertain to use of or access to information, data and/or databases "owned" by the Association member or non-members. These guidelines are intended to present mechanisms for submitting and reviewing requests for Association data.

• Requests for use and/or access to Association data must be made in writing. This request must describe what data are requested, and how these data will be used. Specifically, written requests must include: the purpose/aims of the study; the general approach; how APTA data fit into this approach; other data being collected/accessed; analysis methods; methods of dissemination of findings. Finally, this request must identify who will be involved in the effort. Requests will be submitted to the Senior Director, Research.

• Following approval of a request, the Association will require that the individual/group allowed access to Association data sign an agreement prohibiting further distribution or use of the data beyond the scope and purpose presented in the written submission and establishing any other requirements that the Association deems appropriate.

• The Association reserves the right to deny access to or use of APTA owned data based on the nature of the data, concerns about misuse or misinterpretation of data, or concerns about the capability or integrity of the requestor.

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.