

## OFFICIAL STATEMENT

1111 North Fairfax Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314-1488  
703 684 2782  
703 684 7343 fax  
www.apta.org

### **APTA Statement on the Blue Ribbon Panel on Medical Rehabilitation Research at the National Institutes of Health**

*Paul A. Rockar, Jr, PT, DPT, MS, President  
December 30, 2012*

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) commends the recently released final report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Medical Rehabilitation Research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). APTA supports the spirit of the report and its finding that rehabilitation research needs greater investment, coordination, and strategy to meet the growing need for rehabilitation services, such as physical therapy, and the value of these services to advance the health of our citizens. APTA believes that rehabilitation research significantly advances the mission of the NIH to seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce the burdens of illness and disability. Disability impacts 15% of society globally and 13%-14% of citizens in the United States. Unfortunately, funding for rehabilitation research only accounts for 1%-2% of the NIH's budget. Aligning our resources in research with the potential to improve the quality of life and participation of individuals with disabilities is a priority that reflects APTA's core principles. Further, we believe the acknowledgment of rehabilitation research is critical to meeting the NIH's mission and impacting society in a positive manner.

APTA supports the findings of the Blue Ribbon Panel, specifically the following recommendations that call for the:

- Development and implementation of a NIH Rehabilitation Research plan that is periodically updated.
- Elevation of the role of the National Center for Rehabilitation Research within the NIH's structure.
- Elimination of "medical" from the name of the Center to better reflect the inclusive and multidisciplinary nature of rehabilitation.
- Adoption of a rehabilitation research definition of "the study of mechanisms and interventions that prevent, improve, restore, or replace lost, underdeveloped, or deteriorating function, where "function" is defined at the level of impairment, activity, and participation according to the World Health Organization (WHO) International Classification of Function (ICF) model.
- Increased participation of individuals with disabilities and public advocates in development of a research plan of rehabilitation research at NIH.

APTA commends Alan Guttmacher, MD, for his leadership in appointing this panel and Francis Collins, MD, PhD, for his full consideration of the findings. APTA also acknowledges the physical therapist scientists who were an instrumental part of this extensive effort to review the current status and recommend a future path for rehabilitation research at the NIH: Rebecca Craik, PT, PhD, FAPTA, Blue Ribbon Panel chair, Anthony Delitto, PT, PhD, FAPTA, and Alan Jette, PT, PhD, FAPTA, Blue Ribbon Panel members.

APTA looks forward to continuing its advocacy to advance rehabilitation research at the NIH, with other federal agencies involved in disability and rehabilitation research, and with the private sector. APTA believes the greatest goal is to empower individuals with impairments and disabilities and improve their lives so they can become fully active members of their communities. Investment and focus in rehabilitation research offers hope and opportunity to achieve this goal.