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## Implementing the Evidence: A Guide for PTs and PTAs

“Evidence-based practice is access to, and application and integration of evidence to guide clinical decision making to provide best practice for the patient/client. Evidence-based practice includes the integration of best available research, clinical expertise, and patient/client values and circumstances related to patient/client management, practice management, and health care policy decision making. Aims of evidence-based practice include enhancing patient/client management and reducing unwarranted variation in the provision of physical therapy services.” (APTA Vision 2020)

APTA supports the development and utilization of evidence-based physical therapy services by physical therapists (PT) and physical therapist assistants (PTA) in accordance with their clinical roles. Physical therapists analyze research evidence and conduct their practices considering applicable research findings.<sup>1</sup> PTAs read the healthcare literature to update their knowledge of physical therapy interventions and other health topics appropriate to their work environment.<sup>2</sup> Through sharing current evidence pertaining to physical therapy interventions and related data collection, physical therapists facilitate continuing competence and lifelong learning for PTAs. PTAs support physical therapists in the provision of evidence-based practice by implementing directed interventions that physical therapists select based on evidence from the literature, clinical judgment, and knowledge of patient/client preferences. PTAs also consider prior clinical experiences and patient/client values and circumstances in clinical problem solving, seeking assistance from physical therapists as needed, especially in unfamiliar circumstances.

The following scenarios are provided for clarification:

Scenario 1: The PT identifies evidence in the literature that suggests changes should be made in a patient’s plan of care. The PT discusses the evidence with the PTA and instructs the PTA in changes to the plan of care. They discuss instances when the new intervention may be contraindicated and what to do if the patient/client does not respond as predicted.

Scenario 2: The PTA seeks out continuing education to improve his /her competence that is based on evidence-based practice principles. The PTA shares the information learned in the course with his/her colleagues.

Scenario 3: The PTA supports the decisions of the PT when questioned about them by the patient, by providing appropriate information or referring the patient back to the therapist for further explanation.

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### References

1. American Physical Therapy Association. Evidence-Based Practice. HOD P06-06-12-08. June 2006.
2. Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. Evaluative Criteria for Accreditation of Education Programs for the Preparation of Physical Therapist Assistants. Criteria 3.3.2.18. p. 33. April 2009.