FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 6, 2016

CONTACT:
Erin Wendel
erinwendel@apta.org
703/706-3216

APTA Seeks to Close the Lid on America’s Opioid Epidemic
#ChoosePT Campaign to Promote a Safe Alternative to Opioids for Pain Management

ALEXANDRIA, VA — In response to a national public health epidemic of opioid misuse and abuse, the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is launching a public education campaign, #ChoosePT, to raise awareness among patients and prescribers about physical therapy as a safe alternative for pain management.

Physical therapy is one of the nonopioid alternatives recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in recently released guidelines that urge prescribers to reduce the use of opioids for most long-term pain management. The guidelines indicate that while prescription opioids are appropriate in certain cases (such as cancer treatment, palliative care, and end-of-life care), nonopioid approaches are preferred given the damaging potential side effects of opioids, which include depression, overdose, and addiction, plus withdrawal symptoms when stopping use.

APTA’s #ChoosePT campaign and the CDC guidelines come at a time when increasing numbers of Americans, no matter the economic class, are being touched by the opioid epidemic, which includes misuse of prescription opioids and heroin. According to the CDC, the rate of overdose deaths involving opioids has nearly quadrupled since 1999, and in 2012 enough opioid prescriptions were written for “every American adult to have their own bottle of pills.” The #ChoosePT campaign is meant to remind patients that nonopioid pain management options exist and that they have a choice when it comes to their care.

“Opioids come with numerous serious side effects and only mask the sensation of pain,” explained APTA member and #ChoosePT campaign spokesperson Joseph Brence, PT, DPT. By contrast, physical therapists treat pain through movement. They also play a key role in the crucial patient education process, including setting realistic expectations for recovery. “Research shows that physical therapist treatment can reduce or eliminate the need for opioids by improving physical function, increasing range of motion, and decreasing pain,” said Brence.

Physical therapists treat patients of all ages and physical abilities, and the CDC guidelines point out that “high-quality evidence” supports exercise as part of a physical therapy treatment plan for the treatment of low back pain, hip or knee osteoarthritis, and fibromyalgia—conditions that affect millions of Americans. According to the CDC, 25.3 million adults suffer from daily (chronic) pain.
More about #ChoosePT


The national campaign will focus special attention on key states identified by the CDC as having the highest numbers of drug overdose deaths (West Virginia, New Mexico, New Hampshire, Kentucky, Ohio, and Rhode Island; data from 2014) and the highest numbers of opioid prescriptions (Tennessee, Alabama, West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Mississippi; data from 2012). APTA also is working with the White House in its efforts to address the opioid crisis.

Those looking to support the campaign on social media or learn more should use the #ChoosePT hashtag and follow @MoveForwardPT on Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.

The American Physical Therapy Association represents more than 93,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide.

##