

NEWS RELEASE

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New Legislation Means Reduced Out-of-Pocket Expenses For Patients in Arkansas

ALEXANDRIA, VA, March 21, 2013 — The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) applauds the passage of new legislation on March 14 that has made Arkansas the third US state to limit patient copays and other forms of cost sharing for services provided by physical therapists. Senate Bill 277, which was heavily promoted by the Arkansas Physical Therapy Association (ArPTA), APTA's chapter in that state, was signed into law by Gov Mike Beebe. As a result, patients will now pay less out of their own pockets when they visit a physical therapist, resulting in improved access to vital health care.

SB 277 specifies that patient copays, coinsurance, and office visit deductibles charged by health benefit plans for services provided by physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech language pathologists may not be higher than those charged for services provided by primary care physicians. The bill was authored by Sen Jonathan Dismang (R-28) and Rep Joe Farrer (R-43) and will take effect 90 days after the legislature adjourns.

"ArPTA worked hard to produce and introduce this bill with our sponsor, Sen Dismang. We are pleased that Arkansas legislators agreed that there is a need for this legislation and moved it through both the House and Senate with unanimous votes," said ArPTA President Steve Forbush, PT, PhD, OCS. "High copays in our state were preventing patients from receiving the care they need. ArPTA appreciates their efforts to make physical therapy more accessible by passing this bill."

Health insurers often categorize physical therapy as a "specialty" service. As a result, they typically require significantly higher copays than those charged for primary care services (\$60 or more per visit in some cases as opposed to a mere \$10 to \$20 for primary care). Because the length of a physical therapist's treatment is determined by a patient's unique condition, multiple visits over an extended period of time are often necessary to achieve full recovery. Many patients find themselves paying hundreds of dollars per month in out-of-pocket expenses to receive the care they need, and too often the financial burden forces them simply to stop treatment before it is completed.

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“The physical therapist is a key member of the health care team, offering treatment for a variety of conditions in people of all ages. Those services are only useful if patients can afford to receive them,” said APTA President Paul A. Rockar Jr, PT, DPT, MS. “Our goal at APTA is to ensure that patients across America don’t have to struggle and jump through hoops to access the care they need. It’s why we’ve always championed legislation that supports direct access to physical therapists and reduced copays for the services they provide. This is an important step forward for the people of Arkansas.”

The Arkansas Physical Therapy Association represents more than 500 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and physical therapy students statewide.

The American Physical Therapy Association represents more than 85,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Learn more about conditions physical therapists can treat and find a physical therapist in your area at www.MoveForwardPT.com. Consumers are encouraged to follow us on Twitter ([@MoveForwardPT](https://twitter.com/MoveForwardPT)) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/MoveForwardPT).

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