Board Votes Unanimously to Develop Payment Reform for Outpatient Physical Therapy Services

Unprecedented payment challenges on the horizon; continued increases in utilization of services, fraud and abuse, and regulations; and the limited progress by policymakers to find a solution to the therapy cap have left few options for transformation within the current payment system. Now is the time for APTA to develop a reformed payment system based on a clinician’s judgment to ensure that physical therapists receive appropriate payment for the services they provide. This message, delivered to the Board of Directors (Board) Friday, resulted in 2 unanimous votes, giving the association the green light to develop a conceptual model of a reformed payment system for outpatient physical therapist services.

A panel of APTA staff and payment experts Helene Fearon, PT, and Steve Levine, PT, DPT, MSHA, were on hand to answer questions and speak about the opportunities and challenges of developing a new payment system. A report on the conceptual model will be presented to the Board during its June 2011 Pre-House Board Meeting for review, refinement, and further recommendation.

More Data Needed to Inform Position on Specialization

It’s appropriate for APTA to have a position on licensure and certification relative to advanced standing for physical therapists, payment differentials, and public awareness. To develop any such positions or policies, however, the Board of Directors and APTA staff agreed during their “Mega-Issue” session on Friday that more information is needed. Participants identified areas that need exploration, such as defining “certification,” “specialization,” “advanced practice,” and “extended scope” relative to both internal and external audiences; and determining society’s demand and/or need for specialized services. The group reviewed certification programs and policies from other health care disciplines such as nursing, and the World Congress for Physical Therapy’s position statement and guidelines on specialization, to inform the discussion.

APTA’s Strategic Plan: Update on the Annual Review of Our Strategic Framework

Using APTA’s Strategic Plan to help the association prioritize its work on behalf of members was a driving factor in a session held Saturday that focused on the association’s core strategic outcomes, progress made to-date on the Strategic Plan, and types of adjustments that should be made to the plan given current environmental conditions.
The Board feels strongly that the Strategic Plan is a dynamic document that informs and drives the direction of the APTA and should therefore be revisited often and referred to in our work to progress the association and the profession. During its strategic plan review session, the Board and staff discussed the status of the plan’s 6 strategic outcomes (access to physical therapist services, education, payment for services, public awareness/recognition, research, standards of practice) and their corresponding objectives.

Additionally, Board and staff broke out into groups and ranked the objectives and identified 1 objective that was most critical to achieving each outcome. The groups shared the logic of their rankings and challenges in meeting the objectives with each other and meeting attendees. They also made recommendations for combining, deleting, or re-ordering objectives. Following the break-out groups, the session’s participants individually ranked the 6 strategic outcomes, identifying payment as the most vital outcome in the Strategic Plan.

The information gained in the session will help inform changes that will be made to the Strategic Plan in the next few months, as well as in the next iteration of the plan that will be developed in 2012.

**Board of Directors Adopts New Appointed Group System**

Responding to data from Board, staff, and members collected over the past several years, and in coordination with the work that has been done by the Task Force on Governance Review, the Board reviewed the appointed group system and at its February and March meetings adopted a new appointed group system that encompasses both process and structure.

The revisions to the system are designed to:

- Align the appointed group structure and process design with the APTA Task Force on Governance Review vision and proposals.
- Recommend practices and processes that will increase the value of Board-appointed groups to the Board, association, and the individual participants.
- Enhance how information flows among Board, appointed groups, and staff.
- Ensure that a broader representation of members can participate in Board-appointed groups.

Over the next few weeks, APTA will communicate additional information about the new system in this and other vehicles to inform members about the changes. Stay tuned for more information!

If you have any questions that cannot wait until more detailed information is available, please contact executiveoffice@apta.org.
Hot Topic Session: The Use of Support Personnel
Saturday’s Board of Directors (Board) meeting ended with a highly interactive session on the use of support personnel. With a motion anticipated coming to the June House of Delegates on delegation and supervision of care and payment differentials being introduced with increasing frequency, the session provided a timely venue for discussion about APTA’s policies, models of care, and state practice acts as they relate to extenders of care. Board members, APTA staff, and meeting attendees participated in 2 exercises designed to gauge the variances in attitudes about the use of support personnel.

Revenue Up, Expenses Under Budget in 2010
Despite the financial challenges of the 2 previous years, 2010 ended strong for APTA with increases in membership and revenue over 2009, under-budgeted spending, and above-benchmark returns on investments. In addition, the association did not need to use investment income to meet the budgeted change in net assets. This was not the case in 2008 and 2009. Although the nation has been slow to recover from the 2008 economic downturn, APTA has made solid gains in its financial position. APTA’s 2010 financial statement will be published in the Annual Report in May, along with the year’s accomplishments and initiatives that support the association’s Strategic Plan and core values.

Board Members Volunteer at Local Family Center
In keeping with APTA's organizational values that include a commitment to social responsibility, the Board of Directors (Board) participated in a community service project on March 2 at the Ruby Tucker Family Center in Alexandria, Virginia, which provides after-school tutoring, mentoring, and homework help for area children. At the end of the Board meeting on Saturday, APTA President Scott Ward, PT, PhD, reflecting on the afternoon spent playing with the children, said, “It’s always great to start our work together here in Alexandria by giving back to the community.”