

America's Seniors and Veterans May Soon Have Better Access to Falls Prevention Services Provided by Physical Therapists



Two bipartisan bills introduced in Congress aim to enhance access to falls prevention services for Medicare beneficiaries and veterans.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 22, 2004

Contact: Sara E. Shannon
sarashannon@apta.org

Alexandria, Va. — The American Physical Therapy Association urges bipartisan congressional support of two legislative initiatives that would expand access to physical therapist-provided falls prevention benefits for America's seniors and veterans. Falls prevention services are essential for reducing emergency room visits, hospital stays, and deaths resulting from falls in older adults.

[According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), more than 1 in 4 older adults fall each year. Falling once doubles the chances of falling again. These falls lead to 36,000 deaths, 3 million emergency department visits, and 1 million hospital stays annually, with an average falls-related hospitalization cost of \$30,000. In total, falls among older adults cost \$50 billion in medical expenses every year.

"Falls can be prevented by addressing modifiable risk factors through effective preventive strategies; however, access to falls screening and prevention services is currently limited," said APTA President Roger Herr, PT, MPA.

"This is why the American Physical Therapy Association strongly supports two bipartisan legislative initiatives before the 118th Congress addressing falls prevention services for seniors and veterans. We commend Reps. Carol Miller, R-W.Va., and Melanie Stansbury, D-N.M., for showing leadership in introducing the [SAFE Act \(H.R. 7618\)](#), which aims to expand and increase access to falls screening and prevention for Medicare beneficiaries. We also applaud Sens. Angus King, I-Maine, and Mike Rounds, R-S.D., for their efforts to introduce the [SAFE STEPS for Veterans Act \(S. 4556\)](#), which would ensure access to physical therapist-provided falls prevention services for our nation's veterans through a newly established Office of Falls Prevention within the Veterans Health Administration."

Both pieces of falls prevention legislation are consistent with findings from an APTA report that identified cost savings associated with seeing a physical therapist first or early on for eight common conditions, with falls included in that list. The report, "[The Economic Value of Physical Therapy in the United States](#)," concluded that seeing a physical therapist for falls prevention services was associated with a net cost benefit of approximately \$2,100 per episode of care, primarily as a result of the hospital admissions and emergency department visits that could be avoided.

To educate older adults about the risks of falls and the importance of falls prevention care, and to increase awareness among health care providers and policymakers of the impact physical



therapist-based falls prevention services have on society's health and well-being, APTA is designating falls prevention as the central theme of National Physical Therapy Month in October 2024. Information about falls prevention can be found at [ChoosePT.com](https://www.choosept.com).

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The American Physical Therapy Association represents more than 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and physical therapy students nationwide. Visit [apta.org](https://www.apta.org) to learn more.