Member Input Needed: Survey on Reforming Payment for Physical Therapist Services

Over the past several years, APTA has been engaged in investigating the feasibility and advisability of a new payment system for physical therapist services. This payment system would be based on and promote the clinical expertise and judgment of the licensed physical therapist, reduce regulatory burden, revise coding nomenclature including the aspect of timed based units for reporting services, facilitate the provision of the quality of care, and reduce unwarranted variations in practice.

The development of a reformed payment system will involve various stakeholders, including other health care professionals, policy groups and agencies in the areas of coding, valuation and payment, and most importantly, APTA members. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has also been engaged in reports and projects to attempt to develop a new payment system for therapy services. These reports have generated significant data and can serve as a basis for new models of payment, but have not resulted in the implementation of a new payment system that would serve as an alternative to the present procedure-based fee schedule system and arbitrary therapy caps. Recent policy changes, including the multiple procedure payment reductions (MPPR) and continued regulations that inhibit the delivery of cost-effective and efficient physical therapist care, have created not only the opportunity, but the necessity to move forward with a reformed payment model for physical therapists.

In 2011, APTA will utilize the data and work of government reports, in addition to its own internal analysis, along with member efforts and expertise, to propose a reformed payment system for physical therapist services. APTA will take a 3-step approach to the development of a reformed payment system for physical therapist services: (1) the development of a concept paper that reflects APTA’s activities in this area for the past several years; (2) a request for comment on the concept paper from members as well as payment policy makers within federal programs and the private market; and (3) the development of a formal proposal that will be pushed to payers for use as a pilot or for full implementation.

APTA’s Board of Directors will begin to analyze concept papers at its March Board of Directors with a goal of a formal proposal by the summer of 2011. Key to the concept, and then the formal proposal, will be member feedback and comments. The first step in this process is to collect data from members via a survey on current payment issues, related professional issues and potential for reform of payment for physical therapy services. This will assist in providing additional information to the Board of Directors as they review the concept paper in March 2011. The second will be a formal comment period in March and April for members to provide input on the conceptual model. Feedback from both the survey and member comments will be incorporated into the proposal.

Please take the time to share your perspective on payment via the following survey. The survey will be available until 12:00 am EST on February 28, 2011.
http://www.surveymonkey.com/reformingpayment. This survey is the first step to your contributions to developing a new model of payment for physical therapist.