



American Physical Therapy Association
The Science of Healing. The Art of Caring.

APTA Background Sheet 2002

The American Physical Therapy Association

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is a national professional organization representing more than 63,000 members. Its goal is to foster advancements in physical therapy practice, research, and education.

Based in Alexandria, Virginia, APTA employs more than 160 full-time personnel to fulfill its objectives in the areas of legislative and regulatory representation, practice issues, clinical research, continuing education, public relations, publications, women's initiatives, minority and international affairs, and more.

Some of the activities that foster APTA's goals include:

- Information dissemination. To increase understanding of the physical therapist's role in the nation's health care system, many APTA resources are devoted to providing accurate information to the general public; members of the media; federal, state, and local governments; other health care professionals; and APTA members.
- Professional development. APTA and its member groups regularly sponsor conferences, seminars, workshops, distance-learning courses, and other professional development activities.
- Research. APTA promotes research through graduate education programs, presentation and publication of research reports, research awards, and other activities.

The governing bodies of APTA include a House of Delegates, Board of Directors, 52 state chapters, a national assembly of physical therapist assistants, a student assembly, and 18 sections representing areas of special interest in physical therapy. The sections are Acute Care/Hospital Clinical Practice, Aquatic Physical Therapy, Cardiopulmonary, Clinical Electrophysiology, Community Home Health, Education, Geriatrics, Hand Rehabilitation, Health Policy and Administration, Neurology, Oncology, Orthopaedics, Pediatrics, Private Practice, Research, Sports Physical Therapy, Veterans Affairs, and Women's Health.

History

The history of physical therapy is filled with stories of dedicated professionals working to restore health and alleviate pain in their patients. The physical therapy profession began as a result of the need for care of patients injured in the first World War. "Reconstruction Aides," as physical therapists were called during World War I, worked both overseas and stateside.

The American Women's Physical Therapeutic Association was founded in 1921 with 274 charter members to "establish and maintain a professional and scientific standard for those engaged in the profession of Physical Therapeutics; to disseminate information by the distribution of medical literature and articles of professional interest; to assist in securing positions for its members; to make available efficiently trained women to the medical profession; and to sustain social fellowship and intercourse upon grounds of mutual interest."

In 1922, the decision was made to admit men to the Association. The name was later changed to the American Physical Therapy Association.

For more information on the American Physical Therapy Association, visit our Web site at www.apta.org, or contact APTA Public Relations, 1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-1488, phone: 703/706-3248, fax: 703/706-8578.