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American Physical Therapy Association Colorado Chapter

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About Us

The American Physical Therapy Association/Colorado Chapter, founded in 1945, is a professional, non-profit association composed of 1,400 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and PT / PTA students. There are two PT programs in our state (University of Colorado Denver and Regis University) and four PTA programs (Arapahoe Community College; Pueblo Community College; Morgan Community College; PIMA Institute). Physical therapists are licensed by the Colorado Dept. of Regulatory Agencies (CRS 12-41-101). <http://www.dora.state.co.us/physical-therapy/licensing.htm>

The association's goal is to foster advancements in physical therapy practice, research, and education. Its mission is to provide leadership in:

- ♦ the identification and interpretation of trends and issues in healthcare;
- ♦ communication among members;
- ♦ coordinated action to promote the profession;
- ♦ sharing of ideas and professional collegiality; and
- ♦ development and improvement of physical therapy education, practice and research.

The Colorado Chapter is a component chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) which represents more than 72,000 members nation-wide.

What Physical Therapists Do

Colorado is a direct access state, which means that a referral by a physician is not necessary for care by a physical therapist. Physical therapists diagnose and treat individuals of all ages, from newborns to the very oldest, who have medical problems or other health-related conditions that limit their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives. PTs examine each individual and develop a plan using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability.

Physical therapists help people with

- ♦ orthopedic conditions such as low back pain or osteoporosis;
- ♦ joint and soft tissue injuries such as fractures and dislocations;
- ♦ neurologic conditions such as stroke, traumatic brain injury, or Parkinson's disease;
- ♦ connective tissue injuries such as burns or wounds;
- ♦ cardiopulmonary and circulatory conditions such as congestive heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;
- ♦ workplace injuries including repetitive stress disorders and sports injuries, and
- ♦ fitness and wellness programs to promote healthy and active lifestyles.

Physical therapists practice in a variety of settings, including hospitals, private practices, outpatient clinics, home health agencies, schools, sports and fitness facilities, work settings, and nursing homes.

Some physical therapists seek advanced certification in a clinical specialty, such as orthopedic, neurologic, cardiovascular and pulmonary, pediatric, geriatric, sports physical therapy, or electrophysiological testing and measurement.

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APTA / Colorado Chapter
Physical Therapist Fact Sheet:

History

Physical therapists formed their first professional association in 1921, called the American Women's Physical Therapeutic Association. Led by President Mary McMillan, an executive committee of elected officers governed the Association, which included 274 charter members. By the end of the 1930s, the Association changed its name to the American Physiotherapy Association. Men were admitted, and membership grew to just under 1,000.

With the advent of World War II and a nationwide polio epidemic during the 1940s and 1950s, physical therapists were in greater demand than ever before. The Association's membership swelled to 8,000, and the number of physical therapy education programs across the US increased from 16 to 39.

Hands On Approach

Physical therapy is provided by qualified physical therapists or by physical therapist assistants working under the supervision of a physical therapist.

The individualized, "hands on" approach that characterizes physical therapist care is highly valued by patients. When a physical therapist sees a patient for the first time, he or she examines that individual and develops a plan of care that promotes the ability to move, reduces pain, restores function, and prevents disability. The physical therapist and the patient then work side-by-side to make sure that the goals of the treatment plan are met.

Therapeutic exercise and functional training are the cornerstones of physical therapist treatment. Depending on the particular needs of a patient, physical therapists may perform joint mobilization (Grades I – V) on a joint (that is, perform certain types of movements at the end of the patient's range of motion) or massage a muscle to promote proper movement and function. Physical therapists may use other techniques such as sharp debridement, electrotherapy, ultrasound (high-frequency waves that produce heat), hot packs, and ice in addition to other treatments when appropriate.

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