

American Physical Therapy Association of Maryland  
Supportive Personnel Committee

CRITERIA OF A PROFESSION

A profession is essential to the welfare of the public. Certain criteria are basic to every profession and are identifiable as follows:

- I A profession possesses a systematic body of knowledge which is identifiable as a distinct element within the field of knowledge and is:
  - A. correlated with the needs of society which it serves
  - B. acquired through specialized and extended education within an institution of higher education
  - C. applied as the skill and art of professional practice
  - D. used as a basis for making evaluative judgments
  - E. developed through research and service
  - F. expanded, promoted and disseminated by publication
- II A profession assumes responsibility for self-regulation by:
  - A. creating and sustaining a professional organization dedicated to serving the needs of the people
  - B. establishing and enforcing a Code of Ethics
  - C. safeguarding the public against incompetent and unscrupulous practitioners and practices by promoting and enforcing legislation to regulate the practice of the profession and related affairs
  - D. developing, promoting and controlling standards of education and practice in cooperation with other professional and educational organizations
  - E. encouraging rewards by society which are commensurate with the quality of service provided and which combine factors of status and monetary income
  - F. promoting the education of competent entrants into the profession in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of society
- III A profession aspires to a set of attitudes and values which are exemplified by:
  - A. concern for human beings
  - B. belief that all human beings are deserving of good service and that this service is given to all who need it
  - C. excellence in practice; intellectual curiosity, inquiry, and the desire to share scientific and professional knowledge; commitment to the science, discipline, standards, ethics, and art of the profession
  - D. personal and social standards which are congruent with professional standards
  - E. interest in, and familiarity with, other bodies of knowledge
  - F. self growth through continuing education

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DEFINITION OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

Physical therapy is a profession that contributes to meeting the health needs of society. Its body of knowledge is acquired through specialized and extended education within an institution of higher education and is based on a broad background in the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences. Specifically, the special knowledge and skills of the physical therapist fall into four general areas:

1. Basic physical sciences (including physics and chemistry) and mathematics.
2. Basic biological and social sciences (including human anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, psychology, and sociology).
3. Health sciences (including physical therapy, medical and surgical principles and practices).
4. Clinical arts and skills (including patient evaluation, planning, and administering treatment programs).

THE PRACTICE OF PHYSICAL THERAPY is directed toward developing, improving or restoring motor function, and maintaining maximum performance within the patient's capabilities, and toward preventing disability. Physical therapy provides opportunities of practice for persons with different skills and interests--clinical, community health, educational, research, and administrative.

THE PRACTICE OF PHYSICAL THERAPY consists of:

A. Clinical Skills

1. Evaluating the patient by performing and interpreting tests and measurements of neuro-musculo-skeletal, cardiovascular, and respiratory functions as a basis for treatment.
2. Planning and implementing initial and subsequent treatment programs on the basis of test findings, and within the referral or prescription of the physician, surgeon or dentist.
3. Administering treatment through the use of therapeutic exercise, massage, mechanical devices and therapeutic agents which employ the physical, chemical and other properties of air, water, electricity, sound and radiant energy, but does not include the use or roentgen rays or radium, not the use of electricity for cauterization or surgery.
4. Delegating selected forms of treatment to supportive personnel with assumption of the responsibilities for the care of the patient and the continuing supervision of the supportive personnel.
5. Applying appropriate psychological and sociological principles in motivating and instructing the patient, his family, and others, toward the attainment of physical-functional goals.



6. Preventing potential disabilities through developing in others, as in self, an awareness of and concern for effective and safe body mechanics, in posture and in activities

B. Community Health Skills

1. Instruction and/or program planning, implementation and evaluation as it relates to the health needs of the public
2. Community health planning
3. Coordination of physical therapy services with those of other health professions
4. Policy formulation as it relates to physical therapy services and programs

C. Education Skills

1. Continuing education of self
2. Inservice education of staff and supportive personnel
3. Educational preparation of students in professional and supportive levels of training in physical therapy
4. Educational preparation of members of other health professions as related to physical therapy
5. Planning, teaching, and fostering of graduate educational programs for physical therapists

D. Research Skills

1. Seeking out, understanding, using and evaluating new information and techniques developed by the research of others
2. Participating in group research, particularly in clinical research
3. Initiating, conducting, and reporting original research (clinical or basic) using the best techniques and procedures available

E. Administrative Skills

1. Administers and supervises programs, staff, and supportive personnel.
2. Provides consultation services to agencies and members of other health professions

The profession of physical therapy has assumed responsibility for self-regulation by sustaining the American Physical Therapy Association which is dedicated to serving the physical therapy needs of the people. The profession is controlled internally by its Code of Ethics, enforced by the Judicial Committee, and externally by the legislation which it has promoted to regulate its practice. It has developed standards of education and participates actively in the accreditation of its educational programs.

Physical therapists are committed to the science, discipline, standards, ethics, and art of the profession. They support excellence in practice, the sharing of scientific and professional knowledge and continued professional growth.