



current news in review

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MEDICARE ANNOUNCES COVERAGE OF PHYSICAL THERAPY SERVICES

The following announcement (slightly abridged) was recently issued by the office of Mr. Arthur E. Hess, director, Bureau of Health Insurance:

"Although physical therapy is a service covered under both Part A and Part B of the health insurance program, the conditions under which payment may be made vary with the qualifications of the therapist and the setting in which his services are furnished, as follows:

"A. *Physical Therapy Furnished by Providers of Services*

1. Under Part A, physical therapy services furnished to patients by a participating hospital, extended care facility, or home health agency, or by others under arrangements with them are covered as hospital services, extended care services, or home health services. The physical therapist who renders the services may be either a member of the provider's staff or, where the services are furnished by others under arrangements made with them by a provider, an independently practicing physical therapist, or a member of a group of therapists. However, such arrangements will have to provide for billing through the participating hospital, facility, or agency making the arrangements; payment will be made on a reasonable cost basis to the participating provider of services rather than directly to the individual who furnished the services.

Physical therapy provided to inpatients of a hospital or extended care facility is, of course, given in an institutional setting. Home health services, including physical therapy, ordinarily must be furnished on a visiting basis to homebound patients;

however, when the physical therapy services involve the use of equipment which cannot be made available to the patient in his place of residence, the home health agency may arrange for the provision of outpatient physical therapy services from a participating hospital, or extended care facility, or from a rehabilitation center. (Under Part B, physical therapy services furnished by or through a home health agency are covered under the same conditions as are applicable under Part A.)

2. The conditions of participation for providers of services require that the physical therapists on the staff of the provider of services must have certain specified qualifications. When a provider furnishes physical therapy services, whether directly or through arrangements with appropriate agencies, the services must be given or supervised by a physical therapist who is a graduate of a program in physical therapy approved by the Council on Medical Education of the American Medical Association in collaboration with the American Physical Therapy Association, or its equivalent, and who is licensed or registered by the State in which he performs his services.

"B. *Physical Therapy Furnished as a Service Incident to a Physician's Service*

Under Part B the services of a physical therapist are covered only if they are 'incident to a physician's professional services . . .' (1861(s)(2)) unless they are home health services described in section A above. There are no specific educational or experience requirements for therapists employed by physicians since there must be physician supervision of the services provided. The services of a physical therapist are considered to be