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FACT SHEET FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides Physical Therapy services to Veterans and Servicemembers. Physical Therapists (PTs) are health care professionals who diagnose and treat individuals of all ages with medical problems or other health-related conditions that limit their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives.

PHYSICAL THERAPY PRACTICE

Physical therapists diagnose and manage movement dysfunction, and enhance physical and functional abilities for movement disorders related to impairments of the musculoskeletal, cardiovascular/pulmonary, neuromuscular and integumentary (skin) systems.

Physical therapists restore, maintain, and promote optimal physical function as well as wellness, fitness, and quality of life as it relates to movement and health.

Physical therapists also prevent the onset, symptoms and progression of impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities that may result from diseases, disorders, conditions or injuries.¹

Physical therapists examine each individual and develop a treatment plan. Evidence-based services are used to decrease disability, reduce pain, improve function and independence, prevent illness, promote wellness and restore quality of life to the Veterans and Servicemembers they serve.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

CREDENTIALS

Physical therapists are licensed health care professionals. Qualification for licensure includes passing the National Physical Therapy Exam (NPTE), administered by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy.



(Photo courtesy of Ann Hamilton)

Another important qualification for licensure is graduation from physical therapy education program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) or a program that is deemed substantially equivalent to

a CAPTE-accredited program.²

POPULATION SERVED

Physical therapists practice across the continuum of care, providing services in inpatient settings (including medical centers and community living centers), home health, outpatient clinics, and tele-rehabilitation.

Physical Therapists are also key members of collaborative teams, which exist in the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) systems of care models (ie. Polytrauma and Amputee systems of care).

Services may include:

- Pain Management
- Manual Intervention and Joint Mobilization
- Treatment of Musculoskeletal Disorders
- Strength and Conditioning/Therapeutic Exercise





- Treatment of Neurological Diseases and Stroke Recovery
- Balance Training/Fall Prevention
- Injury Prevention
- Weight Management Program for Veterans (MOVE!)
- Wound Care
- Pain Management
- Women’s Health
Tele-Rehabilitation
- Adaptive mobility clinics

- Many Physical Therapists have advanced skills, certification, and training in areas, such as: Orthopaedic, Neurological, Musculoskeletal, Cardiovascular and Pulmonary, Women’s Health, Electrophysiology, and Vestibular rehabilitation

VA’s commitment to education resulted in establishment of physical therapy residency programs at Ann Arbor, Cincinnati, Tampa, Salt Lake City, Durham, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Gainesville, Denver, and Madison VA Medical Centers. The Milwaukee VA is only the 8th Neurological Physical Therapy Clinical Residency in the country, and the first such program in VA.

Further, the VA Office of Academic Affiliations is supporting nearly 200 pre-professional Physical Therapy students with stipends during their clinical training.

- *In 2013, Physical Therapists treated over 599,703 unique patients within VA, accounting for approximately 2.4 million total encounters*
- *VHA is one of the single largest employers of Physical Therapists, employing more than 1,850 Physical Therapists, and an additional 432 Physical Therapy Assistants.*

Please contact your local VHA Physical Therapy department to inquire about services available

PHYSICAL THERAPY STATISTICS

- Physical therapists are highly trained health-care professionals. Entry level education requirements include a professional Doctoral degree in Physical Therapy

References

1. *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*. 3rd ed. Alexandria, VA: American Physical Therapy Association; 2014
2. *Today’s Physical Therapist: A Comprehensive Review of a 21st Century Health Care Profession*. Alexandria, VA: American Physical Therapy Association: 2011

