

Section on Geriatrics Position Statement: Physical Therapist Assistants

Physical therapist assistants (PTA) are a value-added resource to both the physical therapist (PT) and the physical therapy profession. An optimal relationship between a PT and a PTA is defined by several factors, including:

- adequate supervision based on the PTA's expertise and the PT's knowledge of that expertise;
- administrative policy and legal requirements;
- mutual respect;
- knowledge of the roles of the PT, PTA, and ancillary staff; and
- a commitment to career development that facilitates the highest quality of and ethical standards for care of older adults

Consistency with the APTA standards and policies relevant to the role delineation and utilization of the PTA is fundamental to the optimal PT/PTA relationship.

The affiliate member of the Section on Geriatrics is an integral and valuable part of the physical therapy team and, as such, has a supportive interest in the profession of physical therapy and the Specialty of Geriatrics. The affiliate member is accepted as a full participating member of this Section within the restrictions of the APTA House of Delegates and Association Bylaws. Any office of the Section that does not lead to the presidency (Vice President and President) is open to the affiliate member through the nominating and election process according to the Section's bylaws.

It is in the interest of the Section on Geriatrics to support and encourage the highest career development for the affiliate member, including participation in Section on Geriatrics sponsored courses and recognition of advanced proficiency in technical skills in geriatrics for the PTA. The PTAs career development enhances the PTs commitment to delivering quality physical therapy services.

Rationale: As of August 1997, PTAs comprise 13% of the Section on Geriatrics membership - the largest of any APTA component. (Update: as of January 2006, PTAs comprise 8% of the Section on Geriatrics membership. The only Section with a higher percentage is Aquatics.) PTAs are an integral and valuable part of the delivery of physical therapy services to older adults and deserve to be supported and encouraged in their career development. This position statement provides the basis for policy making affecting the affiliate member in the Section on Geriatrics.

*Approved by the Section on Geriatrics Board of Directors August 2, 1997
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