

# HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter  
[www.astate.edu/conhp](http://www.astate.edu/conhp)



## Physical Therapy

### Background?

Physical Therapy originated in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe by the promotion of massage and manual therapy. Physical Therapy was introduced to the United States by way of the poliomyelitis epidemic and World War I. During the war, reconstruction aids were used to treat injured soldiers with amputated limbs, head injuries, and spinal cord injuries. After the conclusion of the war, reconstruction aids transitioned into what is known today as physical therapist or physiotherapist.

Today physical therapist are described as “movement experts who optimize quality of life through prescribed exercises, hands-on care, and patient education.” The scope of physical therapy

has broadened to not only treat those effected by poliomyelitis and wounded veterans but to treat most musculoskeletal injuries, neuromuscular impairments, residual cardiovascular limitations, and perform wound care. Physical therapist can also see healthy individuals as preventative medicine.

### Job Description

Physical therapist are required to examine and evaluate a patient. This includes taking complete personal medical history, a systems review, and a compilation of test and measures. After

evaluating and examining a patient, therapists are require to make a physical therapy diagnosis and prognosis bases on their examination findings. A physical therapy diagnosis differs from a medical diagnosis. Physical therapist diagnosis include functional impairments and activity restrictions opposed to specific a medical diagnosis being diseases processes or medical states. There are several factors that will influence the prognosis of a patient including their prior level of function and diagnosis. Next a physical therapist will begin treating a patient based on the patient specific diagnosis. Physical therapy interventions include manual therapy techniques, the use of



modalities, therapeutic exercise, and therapeutic activities, amongst other things. It will also be the physical therapist job to plan for proper discharging of a patient.

### **Work Settings**

Because physical therapy covers such a broad spectrum of areas, they can work in a variety of different settings. The primary settings you will see physical therapist is in an outpatient clinic, hospital, or inpatient facility. Other settings include skilled nursing facilities, schools, hospice centers, industrial settings, sports training facilities, and fitness centers. In each setting, the patient population will look drastically different. For example, those who work in outpatient may see healthier older adults coming in after a routine surgery compared to those physical therapist treating in a hospital seeing patients with acute illnesses and hospitalizations.

### **Education**

As of 2016 the entry level degree for physical therapist is a doctorate of

physical therapy. Nationally, there are roughly 200 colleges/universities supporting more than 250 accredited professional physical therapy programs. Physical therapy programs include both a didactic portion and clinical education preparing students to become entry level clinicians. Physical therapy programs are typically 3 years long and include curriculum in anatomy/physiology, exercise physiology, kinesiology, neuroscience, and cardiovascular and pulmonary. Most physical therapy programs require that students have obtained a bachelor's degree prior to admission into the program. However, there are some programs that offer a 3+3 curricular format in which 3 years of specific pre-professional courses must be taken before the student is allowed to advance into a 3-year professional DPT program.

### **A-State Dept. of Physical Therapy**

Fortunately, Arkansas State University offers two accredited physical therapy programs, the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) and Associate of Applied

Science for the Physical Therapy Assistant (AAS). Further information on the programs can be on Arkansas States website by searching physical therapy or by contacting Dr. Shawn Drake at [sdrake@astate.edu](mailto:sdrake@astate.edu).

### **References**

- <https://www.astate.edu/college/conhp/departments/physical-therapy/>
- <https://www.apta.org/AboutPTs/>
- [https://journals.lww.com/jopte/Abstract/2003/10000/The\\_History\\_of\\_Physical\\_Therapy\\_Practice\\_in\\_the.3.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/jopte/Abstract/2003/10000/The_History_of_Physical_Therapy_Practice_in_the.3.aspx)
- <https://www.britannica.com/science/physical-therapy>
- <https://www.wcpt.org/node/47867>

### **Other News**

\*\*If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at [hanrahan@astate.edu](mailto:hanrahan@astate.edu).

The Arkansas State University Employee Wellness Newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Health questions can be addressed to Dean Susan Hanrahan, Ph.D., ext. 3112 or [hanrahan@astate.edu](mailto:hanrahan@astate.edu). Produced by Kayla Leal, graduate student in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Physical Therapy Program.