

NEWS RELEASE

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INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT REACHES AGREEMENT: PATIENT SELF-REFERRAL TO PHYSICAL THERAPY IMPROVES PUBLIC HEALTH

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ALEXANDRIA, VA -- This past week in Washington, DC, physical therapists from around the world heard that direct access and patient self-referral to a physical therapist is proven to be safe, and results in improved health outcomes, more timely care, higher patient satisfaction, and lower costs, says the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), co-host of the International Summit on Direct Access and Advanced Scope of Practice.

“We were very pleased to host this event,” says APTA President R. Scott Ward, PT, PhD. “This weekend we heard evidence from around the world that clearly demonstrates that direct patient access to physical therapists is appropriate for all Americans. The findings of this conference confirm that the legislation allowing patients to access physical therapists without a referral -- legislation that currently exists in 44 states -- is worth pursuing in all states and at the federal level.”

Leaders from 18 countries attending the Summit endorsed the results of research that demonstrate that patient self-referral to physical therapy is best for all health systems, whether public or private. Direct access and patient self-referral allows patients to access physical therapy as their first choice for rehabilitation and wellness programs. A physician referral is not required.

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“Physical therapists are able to act as first contact practitioners, and patients may seek direct services without referral from another health care professional,” says Marilyn Moffat, PT, DPT, PhD, FAPTA, president of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT). “The results of this wide body of research are clear: patients benefit from self-referral and direct access. We encourage legislators and health administrators around the world to consider these findings.”

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) shared its successes with direct access during a symposium, panel discussion, and breakout sessions.

“Canada has been a world leader in legislating direct access so that patients can self-refer to physiotherapy,” says Alice Aiken, PT, PhD, president of CPA. “Patient self-referral is legal in all provinces of Canada.”

Approximately 150 physical therapists from around the world attended the meeting, which was co-hosted by APTA, WCPT, and CPA. For more information, visit APTA’s Web site at www.apta.org/internationalsummit.

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Physical therapists are highly-educated, licensed health care professionals who can help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility — in many cases without expensive surgery or the side effects of prescription medications. APTA represents approximately 76,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Its purpose is to improve the health and quality of life of individuals through the advancement of physical therapist practice, education, and research. In most states, patients can make an appointment directly with a physical therapist, without a physician referral. Learn more about conditions physical therapists can treat and find a physical therapist in your area at www.moveforwardpt.com.