

GET THE JOB

Becoming a Physical Therapist

Physical therapy is one of the fastest-growing employment sectors in today's job market. Given the built-in ability to restore people to physical health, it's no wonder young professionals are drawn to the opportunity.

The goal of physical therapists is to improve quality of life through prescribed exercise, hands-on care and patient education.

According to the American Physical Therapy Association, physical therapists diagnose and treat individuals of all ages, from newborns to people at the end of life. This may include treating patients with injuries, disabilities or other health conditions. It also may include caring for patients looking to become healthier and to prevent future problems.

WHEN DID THE FIELD GET ITS START?

The origin of modern physical therapy began toward the end of the 19th century. The polio epidemic became wide-



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spread in the United States in 1916, causing the need for muscle testing and muscle re-education.

During World War I in 1917, people were recruited to help rehabilitate injured soldiers and the field of physical therapy was officially born.

HOW TO BECOME A PHYSICAL THERAPIST

According to the APTA, to

practice as a physical therapist in the U.S., you must earn a doctor of physical therapy degree from a Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education-accredited physical therapist education program and pass a state licensure exam.

These programs typically take three years to complete. Here are some of the main

content areas in this curriculum, as outlined by the APTA:

- Biology/anatomy.
- Cellular histology.
- Physiology.
- Exercise physiology.
- Biomechanics.
- Kinesiology.
- Neuroscience.
- Pharmacology.
- Pathology.
- Behavioral sciences.

- Communication.
- Ethics/values.
- Management sciences.
- Finance.
- Sociology.
- Clinical reasoning.

UNDERSTANDING INDUSTRY PROCESSES

Physical therapists follow a defined scope of practice that is recognized throughout the industry as being the standard for performance and patient care.

This scope of practice is comprised of three components: professional, jurisdictional and personal. Here is a brief breakdown from the APTA.

Professional: The professional scope of practice is grounded in the profession's unique body of knowledge, supported by educational preparation, based on a body of evidence, and linked to existing or emerging practice frameworks.

Jurisdictional: This legal scope of practice is established by a state's practice act governing the specific physical therapist's license, and the rules adopted pursuant to that act.

Personal: Personal scope of practice consists of activities for which an individual physical therapist is educated and trained, and that he or she is competent to perform.

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HOT JOB PROFILE

HEALTH EDUCATORS AND COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

Number of jobs in 2019: 127,100

Job outlook, 2019-29: 13% (Much faster than average)

Employment change, 2019-29: 17,000

The role: Health educators teach people about behaviors that promote wellness. Community health workers collect data and discuss health concerns with members of specific populations or communities.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Education required: Health educators need at least bachelor's degree. Community health workers typically need to have at least a high school diploma and must complete a brief period of on-the-job training.

Job outlook: Growth will be driven by efforts to improve health outcomes and to reduce healthcare costs by teaching people healthy behaviors and explaining how to use available healthcare services.

AD SPACE