

PT ADVOCACY 101

What it is | How to do it | Why it matters

What it is

Advocacy: noun; "The act or process of supporting a cause or proposal"

The Five Pillars - aka The Five P's

- **Personal-** advocating for yourself and your skills as a clinician.
- **Professional-** advocating for the service of physical therapy within the healthcare system.
- **Public-** informing the public in regards to the education, skills, and value that physical therapists offer.
- **Political-** educating legislators in regards to the services physical therapists offer and the value the profession brings to our healthcare system.
- **PT-PAC-** the driving force behind making changes in the political system which will ultimately push the profession forward.



How to do it: 2 easy steps

Step One: Get Informed

The bad news: Healthcare is a moving target, constantly changing and difficult to understand if not closely followed.

The good news: it has never been easier to stay up to date on current events affecting our profession. The APTA website, resources, and social media accounts offer a never ending supply of information so that clinicians can educate themselves and others as to the value physical therapy brings to consumers and the healthcare system at large. Below is a list of resources that are useful to get started.

- APTA website: information on current events at state and federal levels. www.APTA.org/Advocacy
- APTA Grassroots Toolkit: Three-part resource that first offers an introduction to the legislative process and its impact on the profession of physical therapy. It goes on to suggest ways to develop your message, participate in advocacy efforts, and have your voice heard. www.APTA.org/TakeAction/Toolkit
- PTeam: updates and information about current events and alerts that inform you when action is needed, all sent directly to your inbox. www.APTA.org/PTeam

Why it matters

The most important takeaway of the newsletter is this:

Regardless of your decision whether or not to participate in advocating for your profession, your career is affected by the results.

Our professional scope of practice is dictated by legislation- state practice acts and federal guidelines - that outline what we can and cannot do as physical therapists. This legislation also affects our reimbursement rates by insurance companies, how we can market our services, and how we can access our patients.

Thus, the act of advocating for your profession allows you to have a say in the direction of your future. Advocacy allows you to protect yourself and your career from moving in directions you may disagree with.

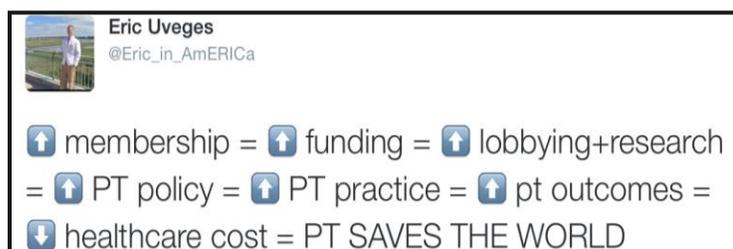
Advocacy = Empowerment

Start by joining the APTA and donating to PT-PAC. Educate others on the benefits physical therapy provides to patients and the healthcare system at large. Get informed on current state and national issues, and contact legislators to show them why what we do matters. Take control of your future and let your voice be heard.

Doctors of physical therapy are not medical doctors, and medical doctors are not doctors of physical therapy. Physical therapy is not a subspecialty of the medical profession. Physical therapists provide a unique but complimentary service that physicians are untrained to provide.

- APTA Policy Center: user-friendly resource for explaining what physical therapy is, the skill set our clinicians possess, and the value we bring to healthcare. <http://policy.apta.org/About/Value>
- Twitter: Revolutionary social media site allowing users to connect directly with other clinicians, legislators, and organizations to get informed and have their voice heard. Search content using the hashtags #DPTstudent, #solvePT, and #PTadvocacy to see what others are saying and participate in the conversation. The link below includes a great introductory list of physical therapists to follow for more information:

<http://physicaltherapy.about.com/od/typesofphysicaltherapy/fl/Influential-Physical-Therapists-on-Twitter.htm>



Step Two: Take ACTION

The next step after getting informed of current events in our profession is to take action. Action can occur in many different forms and range from passive to more direct measures, specifically targeting those who influence our profession most, including legislators, insurance companies, and the public.

Passive actions include maintaining an active membership with the APTA, paying state chapter dues, and donating to PT-PAC. These monetary contributions are the easiest, most basic form of action and provide an essential aspect of advocating for the profession: funding the advocacy efforts of lobbyists and larger organizations to achieve the goal of moving physical therapy forward. Moving beyond passive action is where the magic happens.

Active, grassroots efforts by students and clinicians are the most successful way to have an impact on advocacy efforts and the profession at large. This means educating legislators, healthcare professionals, and the public about how PT can be an effective conservative treatment for numerous health conditions, saving the healthcare system money and providing a better quality of life for patients (and providing the research to support these statements!)

Legislators love hearing from their constituents. Remember, they were elected to represent the members of their district - that means YOU! The APTA Legislative Action Center and Take Action app allow you to contact your local, state, and federal representatives with a few clicks.

<http://www.apta.org/TakeAction/LegislativeActionCenter/>