



Members of the Arizona Physical Therapy Association:

I hope this e-mail finds you well. These are difficult times for many, and I appreciate your understanding, compassion, and empathy for those around you. I would like to provide you with a brief update of Association matters and express my most sincere appreciation for all Physical Therapists, Physical Therapist Assistants, and Student members. Thank you for your efforts to improve the health of society.

APTA is leaving final determination regarding Patient Care and Practice Management decisions to individual providers. APTA encourages PTs, PTAs, and students to flatten the curve of the COVID-19 outbreak by following CDC guidance to minimize exposure in the clinic. Department of Homeland Security and Executive Order 2020-12 has classified Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants as essential healthcare service providers.

As most know, HB.2536 Telemedicine was not heard by the Senate before the State Legislators recessed due to the Coronavirus. The Arizona Physical Therapy Association issued a call to action, which resulted in over 500 e-mails to the Governor's office, and our efforts were rewarded with Executive Order 2020-15, which allows all Licensed healthcare providers in the State of Arizona telemedicine privileges for the duration of the Public Health Emergency. We will continue to push for passage of HB.2536 for a more permanent status to our telemedicine privileges in Arizona when State Legislators reconvene.

We did receive several inquiries regarding PTAs use of Telemedicine. The Arizona Board of Physical Therapy has confirmed that Executive Order 2020-15 allows Physical Therapist Assistants to provide telemedicine services under the general supervision guidelines. Refer to R4-24-303 Patient Care Management in the Physical Therapy rules for details.

We encourage Physical Therapists and Physical Therapists Assistants to practice in accordance with all State Practice regulations and restrictions. Please check the Arizona State Board of Physical Therapy website at www.ptboard.az.gov for updates or specific questions related to telemedicine privileges. The Arizona Physical Therapy Association is working on a FAQ page to distribute to our members. It is in the process of building a dedicated webpage to resources and materials directly related to the Coronavirus. Please stay tuned for additional information.

Please remember, PTs were not initially included in the list of Federally approved healthcare providers to practice telehealth. PTs have been approved to perform "e-visits," but on Friday, March 27th, the CARES act was passed, giving us a window of opportunity to push for inclusion of PTs into Federal telehealth legislation. We are currently asking our members to complete the template letter on the APTA website at www.apta.org/telehealth and send to CMS. Instructions for submission are included at the top of the letter template. The Arizona Physical Therapy Association is closely monitoring a CMS update from March 30th, which included some Therapy codes but fell short of allowing Physical Therapists to conduct Telehealth visits and will update you as new information comes available.

State Payor Relations Chair, Marlene DeRosa, is creating a Telehealth coding guide that should be finalized by the end of the week for distribution to our members. This guide will be posted on our dedicated webpage of Coronavirus resources and materials as soon as it is published.

The Arizona Physical Therapy Association will continue to suspend all in-person meetings until further notice. Currently, Federal guidelines regarding social distancing have been extended until April 30th, but APTA recently announced that the House of Delegates and NEXT Conference will be canceled. Unfortunately, the Arizona Physical Therapy Association will also be canceling our May 2nd Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the AzPTA, 50th Anniversary of the PTA, and awarding of the Pauline Wampler Award until further notice.

Please know we are doing everything in our power, working with multiple State and Federal Authorities and advocacy groups, to advocate on behalf of our members. This is a rapidly evolving situation, and I hope to keep you all as informed as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact us at admin@aptaaz.org if you have additional questions or concerns.

Best to all of you during these difficult times. Stay Healthy and Well.

Brian Schmitz PT, DPT
President, Arizona Physical Therapy Association