New Indiana Law Gives Patients Direct Access to Physical Therapists

Major milestone in patient access campaign achieved; APTA president says there’s more to do

ALEXANDRIA, VA, April 29, 2013 — Today, Indiana Gov Mike Pence signed HB 1034, granting Hoosiers direct access to evaluation and treatment by a physical therapist (PT) without a physician referral. Ensuring a patient’s choice in which health care professional to see and when has been a longtime goal of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) and its state chapters. Passage of HB 1034 signifies a landmark moment for the physical therapy profession in that all 50 states and the District of Columbia now allow patients to be evaluated by a physical therapist without a referral. With enactment of HB 1034, 48 states and DC also allow some level of treatment by a PT without a referral. The new law takes effect July 1, 2013.

“We are thrilled that Indiana has become the latest state to offer patients the choice of direct access to physical therapist services. Ensuring patient access is a cornerstone of APTA’s vision and mission,” said APTA President Paul A. Rockar Jr, PT, DPT, MS. “I congratulate our colleagues in the Indiana Chapter for their resilience and dedication in enacting this vital legislation after many years of tough battle. I also want to thank Rep David Frizzell for authoring the bill and Sen Patricia Miller for sponsoring the bill in the Senate.”

The bill, which was promoted by the Indiana Chapter of APTA (INAPTA), permits patients to be evaluated and treated by a physical therapist for 24 calendar days without a referral from a physician or other provider; however, referrals will continue to be required for spinal manipulation and sharp debridement. After 24 days, the PT must obtain a referral from another, authorized provider to continue treatment. Prior to passage of the new law, a referral was required for all physical therapist services, both evaluation and treatment.

Pauline Flesch, PT, MPS, INAPTA legislative chair, remarked, “The long, hard legislative journey to obtain direct access to physical therapist services makes this victory extremely gratifying. Our patients now have a choice of providers, and Indiana physical therapists can be proud to live and work in a more contemporary practice environment.”
INAPTA President Shane Sommers, PT, MS, OCS, CSCS, added, “This is a great victory for patients and physical therapy in Indiana. After the combined efforts of our legislative committee, and the grassroots effort by local physical therapists, patients finally have direct access to physical therapist services. This gives us great momentum and helps us to advance patient care.”

As we celebrate this legislative success in Indiana, APTA will also continue to work toward improved patient access across the country. While all states now allow patients to be evaluated by a physical therapist without a referral, there are still significant restrictions in many states that continue to impede patient access to physical therapist services. “We’d like to see unrestricted patient access to physical therapists in all 50 states. Unrestricted patient access is considered the ‘gold standard’ for patient care as it does not include arbitrary restrictions, such as time or visit limits,” said Rockar. Patients in 17 states currently enjoy unrestricted patient direct access.

The Indiana Chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association (INAPTA) is a professional membership association serving approximately 1,400 active and retired physical therapists and physical therapist assistants, and physical therapy students.

The American Physical Therapy Association represents more than 85,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Learn more about conditions physical therapists can treat and find a physical therapist in your area at www.MoveForwardPT.com. Consumers are encouraged to follow us on Twitter (@MoveForwardPT) and Facebook.

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