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## Physical Therapy and Physical Therapy Assisting – In Demand!

Physical Therapy is a dynamic, licensed, allied health profession with an established theoretical and scientific foundation. The profession credits Mary MacMillian with formalizing it in the United States circa 1921. The field has widespread clinical applications and is focused on the restoration, maintenance and promotion of physical function and movement for individuals across the lifespan and anywhere on the physical health spectrum. Care can be delivered in a multitude of settings ranging from hospitals to a patient's

home. Physical therapy includes mediums of care such as active or passive exercises, gait and balance training, the use of physical agents to decrease pain, and tissue and joint manipulation to increase range of motion and improve quality of life. The field also offers specializations in areas such as orthopedics, geriatrics, neurology, pediatrics, manual therapy, and healthcare policy and leadership.

While a physical therapist (PT) must develop a patient's plan of care and formulates the therapy diagnosis through a comprehensive evaluation process, physical therapist assistants (PTAs) are tasked to carry out an established plan of care under the direction of a PT. The relationship between these two members of the profession is vital to the delivery of physical therapy services.

2019 marked the 50th anniversary of the first PTA graduates. PTA has emerged to not only be vital to physical therapy delivery, but is a well-established, respected, and in demand profession. While PTs must possess a clinical doctorate degree to practice, which may take up to six years, PTA graduates with an Associate of Science, or an Applied Associate of Science, and is able to practice immediately following the passage of the licensure exam. This makes entry into the profession of physical therapy extremely attractive. Per the Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy education, there were over 300 PTA programs throughout the country in 2019.

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