

The Academy of Pelvic Health Physical Therapy (APTA Pelvic Health) invites Physical Therapist Assistants (PTA) to participate in the continuing education courses in the pelvic and pregnancy series (CAPP, or Certificate of Achievement in Pelvic/ Pregnancy). Participation for PTAs will include successful completion of lab skills testing and written examinations. Currently, the “CAPP” designation may only be achieved by PTs. While PTAs are encouraged to attend the CAPP courses, the CAPP designation remains for the practitioners (PTs) who will perform evaluative activities with patients/clients.

The intent of the CAPP courses is to provide a greater knowledge base for the PTA who is working in pelvic health and obstetric health. While the courses include a significant portion of evaluation content, APTA Pelvic Health feels that the PTA working in this field benefits from understanding the evaluative components provided by the PT.

In welcoming our PTA colleagues to our CAPP courses, APTA Pelvic Health anticipates that PT/PTA pelvic health teams will desire guidance on appropriate PTA utilization. Thus, APTA Pelvic Health is providing the following six statements regarding PTA practice in pelvic health:

- APTA Pelvic Health entrusts the PT and PTA to know, understand, and adhere to state practice acts and any rules/regulations that govern that PT and PTA’s professional licenses in relation to working with patients/clients with pelvic health conditions.
- The delegating PT must have documented didactic and psychomotor training and have experience treating patients with pelvic floor issues before handing the patient off to a PTA, with the PTA working under the plan of care established by the PT.
- Internal pelvic intervention often requires continuous evaluation and assessment by the PT. Thus, some patients may not be appropriate candidates for a PTA due to the need for ongoing assessment during interventions.
- It is the responsibility of the PT to recognize patients/clients with conditions that require ongoing assessment and evaluation. In these cases, the PT should abstain from delegating these patients/clients to a PTA.
- Patients/clients with pelvic health (obstetric, gynecologic, urologic, and gastrointestinal) conditions may have sensitive diagnoses and/or psychosocial considerations that would benefit best from care from a consistent health care provider. Thus, delegation to PTAs for some of these patients/clients should be avoided or managed in such a way to promote patient trust, satisfaction, and adherence.
- It is the responsibility of the PT to exercise judgment as to whether a patient/client’s condition or psychosocial health requires an elevated level of sensitivity that may preclude or limit delegation to a PTA.

APTA Pelvic Health also acknowledges that many PT/PTA teams would like guidance and examples on appropriate PTA utilization. Thus, APTA Pelvic Health is providing the following suggestions on interventions that may be appropriately delegated. This is NOT intended to supersede PTA licensure rules and regulations, nor is this intended to be an inclusive list. However, consider this list as a resource for developing PT/ PTA pelvic health team collaboration.

## Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Education Statement

With appropriate delegation, PTAs would likely provide the following within the PT's plan of care:

- Biofeedback intervention and progression
- Electrical stimulation intervention for the pelvic floor
- Internal pelvic floor muscle techniques that do not require ongoing assessment/evaluation
- External pelvic floor muscle exercise
- Education of pelvic floor muscle home exercise program
- Intervention with vaginal weights
- Intervention with vaginal dilators
- Behavioral intervention for bowel and bladder
- Internal pelvic floor tests and measures

APTA Pelvic Health has developed the above statements and guidelines in correlation with the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) statement on PTA practice.

The APTA states the following:

“Physical therapist assistants (PTAs) are educated and licensed clinicians that work under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist to improve your mobility and help you move forward. PTAs must complete rigorous academic and clinical education associate degree programs; pass a national licensure examination; and be licensed or certified by the states in which they work (the exception is Hawaii, where there is no licensure/certification for PTAs). Working closely with the physical therapist, they may provide components of your care such as therapeutic exercise, functional training, deep soft tissue massage, and physical modalities such as electrotherapy and ultrasound. PTAs may also provide instruction in exercise, proper body mechanics, and other injury prevention and wellness topics. PTAs work with physical therapists to treat patients of all ages who have medical problems or other conditions that limit their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives.

They work in all settings, including hospitals, private practices, outpatient clinics, home health agencies, schools, sports and fitness facilities, work settings, and nursing homes.”

Reference: <http://www.moveforwardpt.com/aboutptsptas/default.aspx#.VnRi3bSZ6fQ> accessed 12-18-15

An additional resource regarding appropriate PTA practice: <http://www.apta.org/PTA/PatientCare>.