

**Working Operational Definitions of Elements of Vision 2020
From the Task Force on Strategic Plan to Achieve Vision 2020**

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APTA Vision Sentence for Physical Therapy 2020

By 2020, physical therapy will be provided by physical therapists who are doctors of physical therapy, recognized by consumers and other health care professionals as the practitioners of choice to whom consumers have direct access for the diagnosis of, interventions for, and prevention of impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities related to movement, function, and health.

APTA Vision Statement for Physical Therapy 2020

Physical therapy, by 2020, will be provided by physical therapists who are doctors of physical therapy and who may be board-certified specialists. Consumers will have direct access to physical therapists in all environments for patient/client management, prevention, and wellness services. Physical therapists will be practitioners of choice in patients'/clients' health networks and will hold all privileges of autonomous practice. Physical therapists may be assisted by physical therapist assistants who are educated and licensed to provide physical therapist directed and supervised components of interventions.

Guided by integrity, life-long learning, and a commitment to comprehensive and accessible health programs for all people, physical therapists and physical therapist assistants will render evidence-based services throughout the continuum of care and improve quality of life for society. They will provide culturally sensitive care distinguished by trust, respect, and an appreciation for individual differences. While fully availing themselves of new technologies, as well as basic and clinical research, physical therapists will continue to provide direct patient/client care. They will maintain active responsibility for the growth of the physical therapy profession and the health of the people it serves.

Working Operational Definitions of Elements of Vision 2020:

Autonomous Physical Therapist Practice

Physical therapists accept the responsibility to practice autonomously and collaboratively in all practice environments to provide best practice to the patient/client. Autonomous physical therapist practice is characterized by independent, self-determined, professional judgment and action.

Direct Access

Every consumer has the legal right to directly access a physical therapist throughout his/her lifespan for the diagnosis of, interventions for, and prevention of, impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities related to movement, function and health.

Doctor of Physical Therapy and Lifelong Education

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) is a clinical doctoral degree (entry level degree) that reflects the growth in the body of knowledge and expected responsibilities that a professional physical therapist must master to provide best practice to the consumer. All physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are obligated to engage in the continual acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities to advance the science of physical therapy and its role in the delivery of health care.

Evidence-Based Practice

Evidence-based practice is access to, and application and integration of evidence to guide clinical decision making to provide best practice for the patient/client. Evidence-based practice includes the integration of best available research, clinical expertise, and patient/client values and circumstances related to patient/client management, practice management, and health care policy decision making. Aims of evidence-based practice include enhancing patient/client management and reducing unwarranted variation in the provision of physical therapy services.

Practitioner of Choice

Physical therapists personify the elements of Vision 2020 and are recognized as the preferred providers among consumers and other health care professionals for the diagnosis of, interventions for, and prevention of impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities related to movement, function, and health.

Professionalism

Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants consistently demonstrate core values by aspiring to and wisely applying principles of altruism, excellence, caring, ethics, respect, communication and accountability, and by working together with other professionals to achieve optimal health and wellness in individuals and communities.¹

¹ Stern DT. *Measuring Medical Professionalism*. Oxford University Press. New York, NY, 2006:19.