Definition: physical therapy from Greenwood Dictionary of Education

Treatment of physical disabilities provided by a trained therapist focused on gross motor skills, movement, and posture. A physician often prescribes physical therapy. (sr)

Summary Article: Physical Therapy from Encyclopedia of Global Health

Physical Therapy (PT) is a field that helps patients recover from, and adapt to, disease and injury. Patients seen by physical therapists suffer from not only musculoskeletal conditions such as low-back pain, but also neurological conditions such as cerebral palsy. Therapists may use a variety of techniques, including range of motion exercises, ultrasound, heat and cold applications, TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) units, and traction. PT may be performed in a hospital, clinic, or patient’s home. Therapists make objective measurements of progress, and send reports to the referring provider. For example, at the beginning of therapy, a patient may have rated his pain at a 6 on a 1 – 10 scale, and at the end of a 4-week session, may report his pain is now a 2/10.

A physical therapist can be certified as a specialist if they obtain 2000 hours of clinical practice within the area of interest.

Most physical therapists have either a Masters or Doctoral in physical therapy. Masters programs usually require two years of post-graduate training. A physical therapist can be certified as a specialist if they obtain 2000 hours of clinical practice within the area of interest. Many areas of expertise exist, including aquatic therapy, cardiovascular/pulmonary, pediatrics, sports, and geriatrics.

SEE ALSO: Activities of Daily Living (ADLs); Back Injuries; Occupational Injuries; Rehabilitation.

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