MNPTA President’s Message

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
— Margaret Mead

What an election season! No matter your opinion, the election will have an impact on our Minnesota Physical Therapy Association for two reasons:

First, there are many newly elected Minnesota legislators who may not know much about physical therapy or our issues which presents an opportunity for EVERY member to get involved in advocating for our profession.

Second, several of the Minnesota legislature’s Health Committees will have new leaders which create some unknowns for us.

Our State Government Affairs Committee (SGA) led by co-chairs Kathleen Picard and Anne Johnson are actively sorting through these changes and working closely with our Board of Directors. The SGA Committee promotes and protects our profession in the legislative/regulatory realm year round – not just during the active legislative session. There are currently numerous active subcommittees acting on various issues.

What are some of the issues that we as an Association are working on?

- A scope of practice bill proposed by the MN Athletic Trainers Association that requires our attention and your advocacy
- Defending the practice of dry needling by physical therapists
- Revising our licensing statute to define supervision of the physical therapist assistant to reflect current PTA training and licensure
- Giving PTs the statutory authority to determine qualification of an individual for a disability parking permit
- PT student loan forgiveness
- Residency funding
- Access to physical therapy services
- Payment Policy under Medical Assistance, Workers Compensation, Auto Insurance, and commercial plans.

This is such critical work! If we aren’t paying attention to and being actively involved in MN State Government affairs, we could get buried by other legislative activity. No one else is advocating for us and for the patients/clients we serve. While our State Government Affairs committee is very active, they can’t be at the Capitol every day.

Our PT Association is very fortunate to have Randy Morris working on our behalf as our contract lobbyist. Randy has been with us for 10 years and knows the PT profession well. His representation and counsel has been key in our efforts to protect and grow our profession. Randy monitors key legislative issues that impact physical therapy and there are many of them! He then helps set a strategy to manage each issue, facilitating meetings with bill authors and key legislators, and developing responses and testimony.
Randy is very well known and respected at the Capital and has opened many doors for us. His scope does not end with the state legislature. He connects us to state agencies and insurance companies. Through his influence, we are in discussions with decision-makers in the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Health and the MN Council on Disability. Randy’s connection paved the way to begin a dialogue with policy-makers within the commercial health plans.

I’m grateful to our SGA committee members and Randy for their tireless, and very effective work. Without them, we wouldn’t be the robust profession that we are. Now, I’m asking you to help. Nobody other than PTs and PTAs is advocating for our profession and, frankly, only a very small percentage of our members are actively involved in political advocacy. So, what can YOU do to help?

1. Join our state grassroots network. This strategy is critical to our legislative efforts. The impact of constituent contact cannot be underestimated. The grass roots network is composed of “key contacts” in each district who are MNPTA members, who have agreed to be the “go to” person in a particular legislative district. The time required is small, but the impact upon the profession can be huge. If you are interested in this role, email the Chapter office (at info@mnapta.org) and we’ll help connect you to the right person. We’re updating our webpage so more information will be available to you and watch for our social media efforts to keep you up to date!

2. Consider attending Day on the Hill on Thursday, Feb 23rd. This year we plan to convene in the newly renovated Capitol for a morning briefing and then we’ll meet our state legislators. We’ll spread the word about the value of physical therapy and address any other legislative issues that present themselves this legislative session.

3. Make a Political Action Committee (PAC) donation. PAC funds help the campaigns of legislators who have been friends of physical therapy. I have heard members say that they don’t like this concept of contributing. The reality is that this process helps establish relationships with legislators and opens the door for key discussions. It is a legal and accepted form of advocacy for both those who are pro PT and those who are against PT. Former MNPTA President Craig Johnson is the Chair of our PAC and you can expect more information from him in the near future.

4. Help us recruit new members to join APTA and MNPTA. We are strong in numbers which gives us considerable influence. Our Profession and Association are facing many challenges and our ability to fight these and advocate on behalf of our profession is more effective with a larger membership base. Help your colleagues understand the important work that’s being done on their behalf and that membership means we can do more. I would love to hear your success stories about recruiting a friend or colleague into our Association and will share them on our MNPTA Facebook page.

Sincerely,
Paul Niemuth, PT, DSc, OCS, ATC
MNPTA President