## PHYSICAL THERAPY – A Health Care Profession on the Move!

As President of the New York Physical Therapy Association, I have the pleasure and honor to represent the interests of 12,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and physical therapy students in New York. Your physical therapy constituents are dedicated professionals who play an integral role in the delivery of health care in your districts and I extend to you our gratitude for taking the time to meet with your physical therapy constituents to discuss legislative issues that impact our ability to provide quality care.

Today, the physical therapy profession is strong and physical therapy professionals play an important role in the delivery of health care to your constituents. The profession is leading the way in implementing evidenced based practice throughout the profession. Just recently, a journal study found that physical therapy is just as effective as surgery in the treatment of spinal stenosis with much less cost and less risk. With the growing evidence of the importance of physical activity and mobility to overall health, the physical therapy profession has experienced exciting advances in the care of Parkinson's, paralysis and the use of high tech devices to aid in rehabilitation to name just a few.

But physical therapy faces its share of challenges and access to physical therapy care is hampered by certain public policies. The most pressing issue facing the profession is the imposition by managed care companies of punitive physical therapy copays. Health plans have essentially defunded physical therapy as a covered benefit and shifted the cost onto consumers by imposing high specialty copayments. The end result is that your constituents and our patients are shouldering the overwhelming cost of their physical therapy care when they or their employer pay thousands of dollars in health insurance premiums. We know from firsthand experience that these co-payments prevent your constituents from receiving medically necessary care as many working families cannot afford these charges, leaving them no choice but to forego treatment altogether. To end this abusive practice, NYPTA asks that you support A.1063 (Cahill)/S.28-A (DeFrancisco).

The New York Workers' Compensation system is another challenging area for the physical therapy profession. Workers' compensation fees for physical therapy are the lowest in the country. Access to care for injured workers is often delayed since physical therapists cannot directly request a "variance" from the treatment guidelines. Low fees and challenging administrative barriers are leading an increasing number of physical therapists to drop out of the system. We respectfully request that the Legislature pass S.2718 (Griffo)/A.2116 (Zebrowski), which would allow physical therapist assistants to provide services under the Workers' Compensation system. Physical therapist assistants play an important role in the delivery of physical therapy services and the legislation would allow them to assist in the delivery of physical therapy to injured workers.

NYPTA also supports S.4969 (LaValle)/A.6092 (Schimel), which would allow the abbreviation of "D.P.T" to only be used by licensed physical therapists holding a doctor of physical therapy degree. Protection of the term "D.P.T." will protect the public by limiting the use of the term to only those individuals appropriately trained, educated, and licensed.

NYPTA is grateful for the opportunity to work with the Legislature to ensure that the physical therapy profession continues to meet the needs of patients in New York State. We welcome your questions and concerns and invite you to contact our legislative counsel, Brian Lucey, at (518) 487-7710 or our Executive Director, Kelly Garceau, at (518) 459-4499 if we may provide you with additional information.

Best regards,

Michael Mattia PT, DPT, MS, MHA
President, NYPTA