

Physical Therapy More Than A "Massage"

I don't know how many times I have had to explain to acquaintances that as a physical therapist I do not spend my day giving massages. Physical therapists provide more treatment than "just a massage," but let's first start by giving a definition of what a physical therapist is. According to the American Physical Therapy Association (2006), physical therapists are health care professionals who diagnose and treat people of all ages who have medical problems or other health-related conditions that limit their ability to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives. We also help prevent conditions associated with loss of mobility, strength, endurance, balance, coordination and function through fitness and wellness programs. Physical therapists are experts in the view of the body based on biomechanics and kinesiology. In a nutshell, we understand the way the body moves or needs to move. Physical therapists must have a graduate degree from an accredited physical therapy program before taking the national licensure exam. Coursework is rigorous and includes classes in anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, biology, neuroanatomy, human growth and development, diagnostics and therapeutic exercise to name a few. In addition to class work, students of physical therapy have laboratory instruction and supervised clinical education. Upon completion of coursework and a passing standard on a national licensure exam, physical therapists can work in a variety of settings. This would include hospitals, outpatient clinics, nursing homes, schools, sports facilities, and home care. Physical therapists in these settings can work with people of all ages and diagnoses. Some possible diagnoses include cardiopulmonary dysfunction such as cystic fibrosis, heart attack, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Other diagnoses include wound care, urinary incontinence, stroke, spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, orthopedic injuries such as rotator cuff dysfunction, arthritis, muscle strains, joint/ligamentous sprains, lumbar and cervical disc herniations, overuse injuries, tennis elbow, frozen shoulder, whiplash, fibromyalgia, etc. Basically, physical therapy may help you if you have any loss of motion, loss of strength, loss of coordination or balance, loss of endurance, loss of function and/or acute or chronic pain. A typical physical therapy examination will include a subjective examination (interview), an objective examination, an assessment and a plan. The subjective portion of the exam clarifies medical history, identifies symptoms and patient goals. The objective portion of the examination can include a posture assessment, range of motion evaluation, strength tests, neurologic tests, palpation and functional assessment to name a few. Once the objective portion is completed, an assessment of the condition is developed and an appropriate treatment plan can be formulated. Treatment by a physical therapist can include exercise prescription, walking assistance devices or braces/splints, patient education, manual techniques, pool therapy and therapeutic physical therapy modalities. Manual techniques can pertain to soft tissue mobilizations, manual stretching and, yes, massage. Some physical therapy locations have a pool available to use for treatment in water. Water will "unload" the body and can be used to decrease stress to an area or increase stress to an area dependent upon the effect warranted. Therapeutic physical therapy modalities involve things such as ultrasound, interferential current, electrical stimulation, iontophoresis, phonophoresis, ice, heat, etc. Physical therapists can also evaluate your throwing mechanics, pitching mechanics, golf swing, tennis stroke, work station and job setting. So, as you can see, physical therapists do so much more than massage. Contact an Excel Physical Therapist to see if they can help you. www.ExcelPT.com

About the Author

Tab One of the most amazing genetic applications in medicine is gene therapy. Also known as somatic gene therapy and therapeutic.

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