



Physical Therapy Board of California

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PHYSICAL THERAPISTS AND PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS RECEIVING AND DOCUMENTING VERBAL ORDERS FROM A PHYSICIAN

Can physical therapists and physical therapist assistants receive and document verbal orders from a physician?

The inquiry regarding physical therapists receiving and documenting verbal orders from a physician was reviewed by the Practice Issues Committee (Committee) of the Physical Therapy Board of California at their meeting on August 8, 2002

A physical therapist's license does not preclude them from performing a function that does not require a license. Considering this, the Committee concluded that in this situation a physical therapist would be acting as a layperson, someone not licensed (e.g. receptionist, clerical staff, janitor, etc.), and could receive and document verbal orders from a physician. However, the ability of the layperson to receive and document verbal orders would be dependent on policy and procedures established by the facility.

A similar inquiry regarding whether or not a physical therapist assistant could receive and document telephone orders from a physician regarding a physical therapy patient was presented to the Practice Issues Committee at their meeting on February 26, 1998. In response to that inquiry, the Committee opined that a physical therapist assistant can take telephone orders from a physician providing the physical therapist assistant documents the orders in the patient record, does not alter the treatment plan and apprizes the supervising physical therapist of the orders.

Note: This document is not a declaratory opinion of the Physical Therapy Board of California.

Adopted by the Practice Issues Committee on August 8, 2002.