

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Oct. 7, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, Governor Brown signed AB 1000 into law enabling Californians to directly access physical therapist services. Currently, individuals seeking relief from pain and injuries that affect their ability to function are required to get a physician diagnosis before a physical therapist may treat them. Effective January 1, 2014

, this will no longer be the case. Consumers will be able to

directly seek

safe, quality physical therapist services

without any delay.

The bill, co-sponsored by the California Physical Therapy Association (CPTA), had tremendous bi-partisan support throughout the entire legislative process and was lauded in the Assembly as an historic compromise brought about by a collaborative agreement within the medical community on behalf of Californians. Although individuals directly accessing a physical therapist will be limited to 45 calendar days or 12 visits before having to be seen by a physician to get a signed plan of care, approximately 90 percent of patients don't require services beyond these limits.

"Our policymakers and Governor Brown got it right in making direct access to physical therapist services a reality for all Californians," said Dr. James Syms, PT, DSc, ATC, SCS and President of CPTA. "Roadblocks to efficient and cost-effective care, particularly when an individual is experiencing pain, need to be torn down. The enactment of AB 1000 does exactly this by giving individuals the right to seek immediate relief from pain, injuries and impairments, while saving time and money by eliminating unnecessary physician-office visits and co-payments."

Also beginning January 2014, **only** physical therapists can own a physical therapy professional corporation. Chiropractors, physicians or any other health care professionals will be prohibited from owning such a corporation; however, they can be employees, officers, directors or shareholders of up to 49 percent of a physical therapy professional corporation. Physical therapists also will be able to actively participate in multidisciplinary practices by hiring other licensed practitioners, including physicians, in physical therapy professional corporations.

In light of concerns about referral for profit, where providers refer individuals to services and

facilities in which they have an ownership interest, **CPTA pushed to include provisions in AB 1000 to strengthen current anti-referral-for-profit laws**

. Beginning next year, providers will be required to disclose their ownership in writing as well as verbally inform patients that they have a choice of providers.

Opponents of the bill, a small group of private practice physical therapists, don't agree with the compromise reached among the medical providers on behalf of California consumers. They have contended Californians should not benefit from direct access with the passage of AB 1000 in light of the corporate employment provision. CPTA's membership disagrees and believes consumer direct access to physical therapist services will, in many cases, position well-trained physical therapists as the entry point into the healthcare delivery system. Through effective triage, patients will receive quality care from appropriate providers who do not have a financial interest in the organization.

Private practitioner Rick Katz PT, DPT, MA is one of many private practice physical therapists who believes the time is right for AB 1000.

"With clinics in California and in other states that have direct access, I have seen firsthand the positive and practical realities that legislation like AB 1000 can bring to consumers while allowing physical therapy practices to thrive and participate in an evolving healthcare environment," said Katz. "It's time California consumers have the same benefits."

According to Syms, "CPTA will continue to support and advance policies that eliminate referral for profit; however, today Californians took a giant leap forward with AB 1000 becoming law."

California now joins all other Western states in offering patients direct access to physical therapist treatment.

CPTA is the largest voice for the physical therapy profession in the state of California and the third largest physical therapy association in the world. CPTA is a chapter of the [American Physical Therapy Association](#), representing more than 82,000 physical therapists and physical therapist assistants nationwide.

SOURCE California Physical Therapy Association (CPTA)

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