NYPTA Research Grant

“The Effects of Timing and Sequencing of Physical therapy on Overall Healthcare Costs”

I. General Information
The New York Physical Therapy Association (NYPTA) is a non-profit professional organization, established in 1952, comprised of almost 6,000 licensed physical therapists (PTs), physical therapist assistants (PTAs) and PT/PTA students. The NYPTA is dedicated to serving the public’s health interests, improving the standard of health for people of all ages, and advancing the interests of physical therapists in the State of New York. For several years, the Board of Directors (BOD) of the Chapter had brought forward concerns about the impact of various economic and payment factors on physical therapy in New York. Members prioritized a need to provide data to legislators, payers, and consumers regarding physical therapy as a low cost option for many musculoskeletal and movement problems. In response to these member concerns, in 2011, the BOD voted to appoint a seven member Task Force to develop a process for the Chapter to facilitate research regarding the relationship between economic factors and patient outcomes in Physical Therapy in New York State. Once that charge was completed, the BOD appointed a second, four-member Task Force to determine a request for proposal process, with suggested scope and costs associated with proceeding. The Task Force recommended, and the BOD subsequently approved, a sum of $300,000 to investigate the topic through a request for proposals process.

II. Description of Project
The New York Chapter has earmarked up to $300,000 to support research proposals directed toward answering the following research question:

“How does the timing and sequencing of physical therapist services relate to overall healthcare costs in New York State?”

III. Introduction/Background
Contemporary physical therapy scope of practice has changed immensely over the past decades, based, in large part, on changing health policies. Ever increasing medical costs is an ongoing problem in today’s healthcare system. Numerous strategies have been proposed and implemented to try to reduce expenses. Rationing care, implementing utilization guidelines, raising patient co-pays and deductibles and cutting provider payment for services are just a few of these. Unfortunately cost cutting practices are often a burden to the patient, the provider or are detrimental to patient outcomes. Most individuals seeking physical therapy services initially access care through primary care which may have a considerable impact on outcomes and costs.1,2 Evidence supporting early access to physical therapy is convincing.3 Though direct access to physical therapist practice is approved in all states, literature indicates that in practice, this is the exception rather than the rule.4 Physical therapists have frequently asserted that receiving physical therapy services shortly after the onset of pain or injury will not only improve patient outcomes, but also prevent the need for other costly measures, such as expensive imaging, prescription medications or even surgery. This is further supported by literature indicating that with practices such as direct access, patient safety is not jeopardized, health service costs (as a result of less physician care) are likely to be decreased, and there is an increased quality of care5-7. Specifically, recent studies conducted in individuals with low back pain (LBP) report reduced risk for future health care with early physical therapy relative to delaying physical therapy.2,8,9 Fritz et al (2012)8
concluded that the timing of physical therapy utilization was strongly related to subsequent health care utilization and costs, with reported total medical costs for LBP that were $2736.23 lower for patients receiving early physical therapy. Advocacy from professional organizations is critical in facilitating change in health policy and service implementation.\textsuperscript{10} Studies evaluating clinical and cost effectiveness to support the initiation of early physical therapy services will assist in the much needed development of service delivery models illustrating optimal implementation strategies.\textsuperscript{10} More research is needed to evaluate the implications of timing and sequencing of physical therapy services on subsequent health care costs and utilization in various diagnoses commonly treated by physical therapists.

**IV. Purpose**

There is a lack of information about the role physical therapy plays in preventing downstream costs within the medical system in New York State. The purpose of this RFP is to solicit proposals from investigators to conduct a study that will examine the effects of utilization, timing, and sequencing of physical therapy services on the overall healthcare costs of patients in New York State.

**V. PROPOSAL AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

1. Submission Overview

Proposals will be accepted until 11:59pm on October 31\textsuperscript{st} 2013. All proposals should be submitted to kgarceau@NYPTA.org, and must be received in electronic format using 11 inch or larger Arial font with 1 inch margins. The total length of the proposal shall not exceed 10 single spaced pages (excluding items not listed under 2.3 Proposal below) All tables and charts need to be embedded in the proposal and no additional appendices will be accepted. Tables and charts should also conform to font requirements.

2. Guidelines for Proposal

2.1. Cover Sheet: See Attachment 1

2.2. Abstract: Provide a brief description of the proposal not to exceed one page.

2.3. Proposal: (limit 10 pages)

2.3.1. Specific aims (~1 page)

The Specific Aims page should provide the overall project goal that addresses the problem, gap or need identified in the background section of the proposal. Define a clear purpose, working hypothesis or statement of need, and expected outcome for each specific aim. Present a central hypothesis (or, alternatively, a statement of need) with a brief overview of the methodology. Ensure that all specific aims relate to and support the overall project goal.

2.3.2. Research strategy (~9 pages)

Significance - Using current literature, explain the importance of the problem, gap, or critical need that the proposed project addresses. Explain how the proposed project will address the aims. Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.
Background – Review the current literature and any preliminary data available to provide background for the current proposal.

Innovation – Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s) to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s). Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions.

Approach - Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Describe specifically how the data will be collected, managed, analyzed, and interpreted. Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims. Describe the strategy you will use to establish feasibility, and address the management of any high risk aspects of the proposed work. Point out any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel and precautions to be exercised.

Timeline – Briefly outline the plan to complete proposed project. Include all relevant milestones such as when expected data will be collected, when certain thresholds will be met, when final analyses will be completed, and any other relevant points given the proposed project. A Gantt chart indicating major milestones to be achieved should be included as an appendix. The NYPTA will review any manuscript prior to submission for publication.

2.4. Environment
2.6.1 Briefly describe the environment where the research will be conducted
2.6.2 Explain how this environment will contribute to the projects’ success (e.g., institutional support, physical resources, and intellectual rapport)
2.6.3 Explain how the project will benefit from unique aspects of the institutional research environment, subject population and/or collaborative arrangements.

2.5. Biographical Statement
2.5.1 Describe your qualifications
2.5.2 Explain how you are uniquely qualified to carry out this study. Identify special training, expertise, or experience necessary to complete the proposed project.

2.6. Budget See Attachment 2

2.7. Timeline
2.7.1 All proposals must be submitted no later than 31 October 2013
2.7.2 Review and selection of proposals to be funded no later than 15 January 2014
2.7.3 Completion of individual research not later than 1 November 2015
2.7.4 Submission of written summary of work completed to date no later than 1 November 2014
2.7.5. Submission of a financial report quarterly, with final requests for approved funds not later than 1 December 2015
2.7.6. Submission of written report and data collected to the Chapter not later than 31 December 2015

VI. REVIEW CRITERIA
External reviewers will score each proposal and recommend a contractor based on:

1. Significance
   Does this study address the goal of the request for proposal? If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or clinical practice be advanced? What will be the effect of these studies on the concepts, methods and technologies that drive this field?

2. Approach
   Are the conceptual framework, design, methods and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, well-reasoned and feasible (as determined by preliminary data) and appropriate to the aims of the project? The assessment of preliminary data should be put into perspective so that bold new ideas and risk-taking by the beginning investigators are encouraged rather than stymied. Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?

3. Innovation
   Is the project original and innovative? For example: Does the project challenge existing paradigms and address an innovative hypothesis or critical barrier to progress? Does the research question address a critical gap in current knowledge as noted in systematic reviews, guidelines development efforts, or previous research prioritizations? Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, tools or technologies for this area?

4. Investigator
   Is the investigator appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work? Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the principal investigator and other researchers? Does the investigative team bring complementary and integrated expertise to the project (if applicable)?

5. Environment
   Does the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Do the proposed studies benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, or subject populations, or employ useful collaborative arrangements? Is there evidence of institutional support as demonstrated in the department head letter?

6. Budget/Timeline
   Is the total cost and feasibility of completing the project appropriate? Is the timeline reasonable and efficient?

REFERENCES


