

## The Task Force on Exercise for the Aging Adult

### HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED?

On June 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> the Task Force on Exercise for the Aging Adult met at APTA headquarters. This group was appointed by the Section's Board of Directors in 2004 and work began with the development of goals and objectives for the task force. Below is a brief summary of the activities done to date, and the areas where we need your involvement.

The goals and objectives were established and approved by the Board. The goals and the high priority objectives of the task force are provided below.

**GOAL I – To assure a comprehensive knowledge base for physical therapist professional education regarding the examination and intervention for the exercise needs of the aging population**

1. Provide sample curricula content on exercise and physical activity for older adults to all physical therapist professional education programs.
2. Address the multifaceted nature of the physiological decline that occurs in the aging population, including differentiating between disuse or consequences of insufficient activity and physiological aging decline

**GOAL II – To establish physical therapist practice guidelines for safe and effective exercise parameters for the aging population**

1. Develop physical therapist guidelines for safe exercise programs for the aging population (patients and clients) with multiple conditions in multiple settings, based, when feasible, on available evidence.
2. Develop physical therapist guidelines for community screening programs for the exercise needs of the aging population.
3. Promote the physical therapist as preferred provider for screening (assess strength, flexibility, balance, posture, aerobic capacity/endurance) for exercise programs for the aging population.

**GOAL III – To identify the needs for and enable consistent integration of the best evidence to support exercise for the aging population**

1. Create an annotated bibliography on evidence-based literature on exercise for the aging population

**GOAL IV – To effectively educate the physical therapy and other professional communities about the role and benefits of physical therapists as exercise experts for the aging population**

1. Facilitate mechanisms for consistent dissemination through diverse section communication channels of the role and benefits physical therapists as exercise experts for the aging population

2. Promote within the health provider professions the preferred provider role of physical therapists as exercise experts in the provision of exercise programs for the aging population.
3. Develop a series of continuing education programs that will assure that all physical therapists have expertise in exercise prescription and programs for the aging population.

GOAL V – To effectively educate the consumer communities of the role and benefits of physical therapists as exercise experts for the aging population

The content outline for the curriculum was developed and task force members will be working on supplying documenting literature to support each area of the content. It is anticipated that this information will come out in a published format that will form the basis of informing academic faculty and practicing clinicians and also serve as the basis for continuing education. It was proposed that continuing education programs occur at APTA pre-conference programs, in home study courses, in the corporate environment (offering them a program for their employees), at contract agencies (offering them a program for their employees), and in university affiliations, especially for clinical instructors. Guidelines were also developed for safe exercise programs for the aging population with multiple conditions in multiple settings, based, when feasible, on available evidence. As further work progresses in these areas, the information will be distributed to the membership.

The next activity was to begin to create an annotated bibliography of evidence-based literature on exercise for the aging population. A total of over 900 articles that were annotated and sorted were gathered prior to the meeting for the annotated bibliography. An additional 346 articles were gathered, and will also be annotated and sorted. This is one area where we will need your involvement relatively soon.

1. The annotated bibliography on exercise and aging will be available on the Section on Geriatrics website. In addition, Geri-notes will be printing selected annotations in each issue. Thus, we hope you will:
  - a. Visit the website and read these.
  - b. Offer to abstract some of these articles for APTA's Hooked on Evidence project. To do this Hooked on Evidence is available to APTA members at [www.hookedonevidence.com](http://www.hookedonevidence.com) or by following hyperlinks from the APTA website and Section on Research website. Your Member ID and Last Name are required to log in to the website. Once logged in, you may search among the published extractions for evidence for your practice and view all the features of this valuable resource. For more information on Hooked on Evidence, please contact David Scalzitti, PT, MS, OCS, Associate Director of Research Services at [davidscalzitti@apta.org](mailto:davidscalzitti@apta.org) or by phone at (800) 999-2782 extension 8555.
  - c. The Section on Geriatrics will be having a special session at CSM to provide instruction for abstracting these references that we have gathered. Opportunities for practicing how to abstract the references will also be built into this session at CSM. In addition, CEU's will be given for this activity. Look forward to further posting of this opportunity as CSM programming is published.
2. If you are an educator, several opportunities are available for you to get involved.
  - a. We encourage you to ask your students to do an abstract for Hooked on

Evidence as a project for a class.

- b. Contact Michele Lusardi (lusardim@sacredheart.edu) if you are interested in meeting with other educators who are asking students to abstract for Hooked on Evidence. We see this group meeting annually at CSM to further enhance educating students about the importance of evidence based exercise for the aging population.
3. Geri-notes will run a column on the Task Force on Exercise for the Aging Adult to keep the membership posted on all developments. Stay involved and read the column.

Work was also begun on facilitating mechanisms for consistent dissemination through diverse section communication channels of the role and benefits physical therapists as exercise experts for the aging population. The initial emphasis will be focused on the development of guidelines for the physical therapist management of exercise programs for aging adults with diabetes, osteoarthritis, and osteoporosis since the Section already has a balance and falls guideline and the Neurology Section has a stroke guideline.

In order to promote within the health provider professions the preferred provider role of physical therapists as exercise experts in the provision of exercise programs for the aging population, the task force decided that the appropriate providers to target initially would be the nurse practitioners. A checklist will be developed in partnership with the nurse practitioner's association. Other organizations related to clinical conditions (osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, diabetes, AARP, etc) will also be contacted.

To promote the physical therapist as preferred provider for screening for exercise programs for the aging population, several activities are underway. A motion will be developed for presentation to the House of Delegates requesting that the APTA public relations campaign promote the physical therapist as preferred provider for screening for exercise programs for the aging population. Component presidents, Section on Geriatrics state liaisons, and physical therapy education program directors will be asked to use the Balance and Falls Kit on the component level to promote the physical therapist as preferred provided for screening for balance and falls for the aging population. A longer, more intense physical therapist examination of the aging population to determine their exercise needs will be developed after the guidelines are finalized.

Several public relations activities were discussed and put forth to educate the consumer about the role of physical therapists as exercise experts for the aging population. Links with other groups and agencies (Senior Olympics, YMCA Programs, etc) will be explored.

Many exciting outcomes have emerged from this meeting. We are delighted to share our ideas and progress with you. If you have any suggestions that would further help our deliberations, please do contact us. We are so excited about this project and look forward to your input.

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