



Opposition to SB 728: 30 Hours vs. 10 Years of Training

Why a Medical Diagnosis Is Important

Physical Therapists' lack of training and licensing for offering a medical diagnosis has prevented the profession from having direct access without an appropriate referral to patients in Texas and the Medicare programs.

“In some cases, physical therapy would not be beneficial to the patient and would raise program and beneficiary costs. In other cases, underlying medical conditions that look similar to other medical conditions would go undetected. For these (Medicare) beneficiaries, overlooked medical conditions would result in delayed medical attention that could result in harmful or negative consequences.”

– Medicare Payment Advisory Commission

Training for a Medical Diagnosis

*An Orthopaedist's
Training Often Includes
10 Years of Training*

- 4 Years of Medical School
- 5-year Residency
- 1-year Fellowship
- Rigorous board certification and re-certification efforts every 10 years.

SB 728's Standard for Screening a Patient

SB 728 sets 30 hours of continuing education in differential diagnosis as the minimum standard for properly screening a patient.

Physical therapists are not licensed to diagnose.

Even in states that allow physical therapists to have some direct access to patients without a physician's order, the overwhelming majority of commercial health insurance plans in those states do not pay for such physical therapy treatment. They recognize the value of an appropriate diagnosis. It's hard to treat something that you cannot diagnose.

30 Hours of Coursework vs. 10 Years of Training

After completing a rigorous, four-year long education in medical school, physicians learn to assess dozens of patients every day during their additional years of training in medical residency in order to be able to generate a differential diagnosis, and then arrive at a definitive medical diagnosis, upon which all cost-effective treatment depends. Making any diagnosis requires taking a medical history and performing a medical physical examination, as well as laboratory work and/or imaging studies based upon the history and examination of each patient individually.

Orthopaedic surgeons, for example, go through nine or more years of such training to gain proficiency in diagnosis and treatment of musculo-skeletal disorders and also to recognize musculo-skeletal symptoms of serious underlying medical conditions requiring urgent treatment. Yet, PT's say just 30 hours of continuing education every two years is adequate for them to properly screen patients for medical conditions? Doubtful, if not specious.

SB 728 would give a physical therapist direct and non-physician supervised access to a patient for 30 days if the PT has completed just 30 hours of continuing education in differential diagnosis or have a doctorate in physical therapy, which is the only graduate degree now available to physical therapists. There's good reason why physical therapists, whether or not they have a doctorate degree or undergo continuing education, are not even licensed by the state of Texas to offer a differential diagnosis. They simply do not have the training to do so.