



Opposition to SB 728 Physical Therapy Direct Access

Physical Therapists Cannot Diagnose a Patient

Physical therapists are neither trained nor licensed to perform a medical diagnosis. Yet SB 728 would allow a physical therapist to treat a patient for 30 days without having a medical diagnosis in place.

A medical diagnosis serves as the foundation for physical therapy services and acts as a filter to ensure that a patient is provided the most efficient and high quality treatment possible. Correctly diagnosing a musculoskeletal condition or injury involves a number of factors, including the performance of a comprehensive history and physical examination, and, when indicated, imaging, laboratory testing, and other diagnostic procedures, none of which physical therapists have the training and education necessary to provide.

The Importance of a Medical Diagnosis

Evidence from one of the largest studies looking at the quality of physical therapists' decisions gave 1,000 randomly selected private practice physical therapists a collection of 12 hypothetical patient scenarios and asked them if they would provide intervention, provide intervention and refer, or refer on to a physician:

The decisions were based on criteria developed by physical therapists. Results demonstrated:

- Physical therapists made all of the correct decisions only 50 percent of the time.
- Physical therapists were correct 56.1 percent of the time for 100 percent of non-critical medical cases.
- Physical therapists were correct 49.6 percent of the time for 100 percent of critical medical cases.

The Importance of Coordinated Care

Physical therapy in and of itself does not represent a fragmented health care delivery model. However, allowing them to practice independently does further fragment the system and move away from a coordinated care model.

A groundbreaking June 2014 study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that physical therapy operating independent of an orthopaedist resulted in a much higher use of physical therapy services. The GAO indicated: "One potential reason for this difference is that non-self-referred physical therapy services can be performed by providers (physical therapists) who can directly influence the amount, duration, and frequency of physical therapy services through the written plan of care required by Medicare."

SB 728

The following organizations are opposed to SB 728:

Texas Medical Association

Texas Orthopaedic Association

Texas Academy of Family Physicians

Texas Ophthalmological Association

Texas Osteopathic Medical Association

Texas Society of Anesthesiologists

TX Chapter – American College of Physicians

TX Assn of Obstetricians & Gynecologists

Texas Pain Society

Texas Society of Pathologists

Texas Society of Gastroenterology & Endoscopy