

# A MESSAGE FROM THE APTA ALASKA PRESIDENT

Hello Members of APTA Alaska:

In the "things to look forward to department," 2021 will mark the 100 Year anniversary of APTA, our Centennial. It will be a year of celebrating and reaching out, thanking, and giving back. Jodi Pfeiffer, PT, BS (APTA Alaska Treasurer) is our Centennial Celebration Ambassador and she will be disseminating information along the way. One of the programs put forth by APTA is the [Centennial Scholars Program](#). You will hear much more detail about this program in the near future from our Centennial Scholar lead, Meera Parekh, PT, DPT, Board-Certified Clinical Specialist in Orthopaedic Physical Therapy (APTA Alaska Secretary). She will be coordinating the application process to help and identify a Centennial Scholar from Alaska. This will be an individual who is interested in serving APTA Alaska in the coming years in various roles and will be supported by a series of in person and virtual leadership development trainings put on and hosted by APTA at their new headquarters. The Centennial Scholars program is fully funded for the chosen Scholar by APTA National and APTA Alaska. It is an investment in our future Chapter and national leadership. The Scholar will commit to 4 trips to the East coast in 2021. Look for more details in the future and contact Dr. Parekh with questions, [mparekh428@gmail.com](mailto:mparekh428@gmail.com).



As humans, social and physical distancing and isolation are contrary to our nature. Even wide-open space loving Alaskans enjoy human contact and interaction...actually, need it for nourishment. That's why the wonders of Spring don't feel quite as wonderful this year. It's harder to appreciate, but beauty abounds as the light replaces the dark, ice gives way and birds return for nesting. This year, there is more than the usual doses of tension, anxiety, uncertainty, and heartbreak. Don't forget the numbers represent individuals. We are in it together and we will get through it.

Since writing the membership 10 days ago, the COVID-19 virus has spread as predicted, but not as badly as feared in Alaska. As a state, we have done well following advice and precautions from our health department and it has made a difference. The latest advisory is to wear facial covering when in public places and contact closer than 6 feet. What was a good idea while interacting with patients in all settings, has now become an obvious requirement. It has been heartwarming and predictable that so many in our community mobilized to make masks for the public and for those in patient care with asymptomatic, but potentially infected individuals. One of my patients today, an MD, reminded me of how we must assume we are all are potential carriers and be treated as such. I asked her how she was doing (low back pain, making rounds at the hospital very challenging and difficult to concentrate) and she replied with a twinkle in her eye, "asymptomatic in terms of COVID," my back is coming along.

I have learned details regarding an outpatient physical therapy clinic that works in close proximity to a medical clinic. The medical clinic had a significant outbreak of COVID-19. The PT clinic had one patient who tested positive, getting it from his grandson. The specific PT who worked with the patient who tested positive was placed on quarantine by the health department and the clinic was temporarily closed. No other patients or staff were infected. The clinic did an amazing job and has a pristine, systematic approach to working with their patients who require physical therapy at this time. We can all be proud of this high quality of care and professionalism.

Our population continues to need us, some suffering in isolation with the inability to get out of their bed or chair, headaches, shoulder pain, back pain, vestibular disorders, pelvic floor dysfunction or pain, and temporomandibular disorders. The list is infinite. Now, in addition, each of those individuals has extra emotional strain. Thank you to the PTs and PTAs who continue to help our Alaskan communities via telehealth. A special thanks to PTs and PTAs around the state on the front lines seeing patients in their homes, in hospitals and getting re-purposed to everything from ED triage, respiratory therapist assistants, screeners and so on. We knew our time would come to be part of the solution and here we are coming through. Never a doubt. There is much more to be done. Thanks for all you are ready to do as we move forward. Hunker down, but reach out a hand to lift someone up.

Please encourage individuals or organizations needing help of any kind to sign up with [AKPTsHelp!](#). We have lots of helpers ready to lend a hand.

Alec Kay, PT, DMT, Board-Certified Clinical Specialist in Orthopaedic Physical Therapy  
President, APTA Alaska