

A MESSAGE FROM THE APTA ALASKA PRESIDENT

APTA Alaska has been working tirelessly to stay updated on the developments of the effects and plans related to COVID-19. This has included working with legislators to ease the path to telehealth registration, working with payers for telehealth reimbursement, and staying abreast of recommendations from the CDC, state agencies and APTA. This effects each of us uniquely in terms of our concerns for those around us, our jobs and our future, in general. Those functioning independently outside of large institutions, educational systems, or large companies may feel the stress of decision making in a more tangible way.

The information coming to us from local, state, and federal sources has been fluid, vast, and sometimes overwhelming. For up-to-date information, I strongly suggest visiting www.apta.org/coronavirus and www.apta.org/telehealth, as these sites are current and thorough. Refer also to the email from APTA Alaska on March 18 with updates on telehealth. These resources are where you will find specifics on safe work environments, indications for quarantine, etc. It would be redundant to list that data here.



In Alaska, providers must report suspected cases of COVID-19 to the Section of Epidemiology at 907-269-8000 or 800-478-0084 (after hours).

For guidelines on addressing return from travel, information for health care facilities, FAQs and more, visit <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/default.aspx>. This contains many links to the CDC guidelines and recommendations. PLEASE FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES.

The most common question I have received from members this week has to do with continuing to keep doors open for our patients. In states where there have been strict Shelter-In-Place orders, there is no directive to close clinics as physical therapy is included in essential services and included in exemptions. The APTA statement on this gives the individual clinicians the authority to evaluate all the unique variables to make that conclusion.

I like this quote from Richard Katz, PT, DPT, MA, President of the California Physical Therapy Association:

Consideration should be given to delay in-person encounters when that delay won't result in an adverse outcome. The underlying premise is to "do no harm." You and the patient must determine if the risk of providing care outweighs the risks of not providing care at this time.

It is crucial that we do all we can to slow the spread of this virus. Use your influence on your patients and use good judgment. Screen your patients appropriately regarding recent travel or symptoms. Stay current with the latest guidelines as they are changing at a dizzying rate. We have an opportunity to do better than countries and states before us who are suffering dearly at this time.

We are clearly in a crisis, but this does not leave us helpless and does not leave us without opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of our patients, colleagues, employees and the community at large. Appreciate this as an opportunity to do something positive and leave those around you with a better path forward. After all, we are physical therapists and physical therapist assistants. That's what we do.

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