

Medicare Patient Choice Act (H.R. 4204)



Position

The American Physical Therapy Association strongly supports the Medicare Patient Choice Act (H.R. 4204), legislation that would enable physical therapists to privately contract with Medicare beneficiaries. H.R. 4204 was introduced by Reps. Lloyd Smucker, R-PA, and Don Davis, D-NC.

Background

Improving patient access to essential health services, including physical therapy, is a core priority of APTA. Too often, public and private insurance programs include barriers to care that result from unnecessary regulatory, legal, and payment policies. Medicare beneficiaries should be empowered to choose their health care professionals. APTA supports a legislative change that would allow physical therapists and other therapy providers to opt out of Medicare, enabling patients to privately contract with their preferred health care providers, including PTs.

Currently, physicians have the authority to opt out of the Medicare program and privately contract with Medicare beneficiaries. Medicare allows other practitioners, such as physician assistants, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, social workers, psychologists, nurse midwives, dieticians, and other eligible providers, to do so as well. Under this framework, these providers are barred from providing any Medicare services to any Medicare beneficiaries for a two-year period or billing Medicare for any care delivered.

The Medicare Patient Choice Act would add PTs and other therapy providers to the current list of health care providers who may opt out of Medicare. To provide greater patient choice and ensure continuity of care, PTs need the capability to opt out of Medicare to continue treating patients whose new Medicare coverage may not include non-participating providers. For patients, this option is of critical importance if they continue to visit the health care provider they know and trust, even if that

provider is not participating in Medicare. It is imperative that Medicare enrollees have the freedom to choose the most appropriate provider and model of care to meet their needs.

Expedite Access to Care, Provide Flexibility, and Reduce Costs

As Medicare administrative burdens and reimbursement challenges persist, APTA members report that medically necessary physical therapist services are delayed — ultimately impacting patients' clinical outcomes — because of the time and resources they must spend on administrative tasks rather than patient care. It is imperative for providers to have the flexibility to choose what is most appropriate for their practices and patients. APTA believes that providers should have the ability to deliver care in the manner they deem appropriate and that Medicare beneficiaries should not be limited in their choice of high-quality health care providers.

This bill could deliver reforms for both patients and providers and produce cost savings for Medicare. In a study by the independent consulting firm Dobson and Davanzo, the bill is projected to save Medicare over \$139.6 million over 10 years.

Endorsements

This legislation is endorsed by the American Physical Therapy Association, APTA Private Practice, the Academy of Doctors of Audiology, the American Chiropractic Association, the American Occupational Therapy Association, and the American Speech-Hearing Language Association.

Facts About Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants



Who We Are

Physical therapists are movement experts who help to optimize people's physical function, movement, performance, health, quality of life, and well-being. Physical therapists evaluate, diagnose, and manage movement conditions for individuals, and they also provide contributions to public health services aimed at improving population health and the human experience. Physical therapist assistants are educated and licensed or certified clinicians who provide care under the direction and supervision of a licensed physical therapist. PTs and PTAs care for people of all ages and abilities.

What We Do

After performing an evaluation and making a diagnosis, physical therapists create and implement personalized plans based on best available evidence to help their patients improve mobility, manage pain and other chronic conditions, recover from injury, and prevent future injury and chronic disease. PTs and PTAs empower people to be active participants in their care and well-being. They practice collaboratively with other health professionals to ensure the best clinical outcomes.

Where We Practice

PTs and PTAs provide services to people in a variety of settings, including outpatient clinics or offices; hospitals; inpatient rehabilitation facilities; skilled nursing, extended care, or subacute facilities; education or research centers; schools; community centers; hospices; industrial, workplace, or other occupational environments; and fitness centers and sports training facilities.

The Economic Value of Physical Therapy in the United States

A September 2023 report from the American Physical Therapy Association outlines the cost-effectiveness and economic value of physical therapist services for a broad range of common conditions. "The Economic Value of Physical Therapy in the United States" reinforces the importance of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in improving patient outcomes and decreasing downstream costs. Policymakers should use this report to inform legislative and regulatory efforts for health care delivery and payment under Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial payers. **Review the findings at [ValueofPT.com](https://www.valueofpt.com).**

Education and Licensure

As of 2016, all PTs must receive a doctor of physical therapy degree from an accredited physical therapist education program before taking and passing a national licensure exam that permits them to practice. Licensure is required in each state (or other jurisdiction, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) in which a PT practices. PTAs must complete a two-year associate's degree from an accredited physical therapist assistant program and pass a national exam. State licensure or certification is required in each state (or jurisdiction) in which a PTA works.

American Physical Therapy Association

The American Physical Therapy Association is a national organization representing 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Our mission is to build a community that advances the profession of physical therapy to improve the health of society.



Co-sponsor H.R. 4204 today!

For more information and contact info for APTA Government Affairs staff, scan here or visit apta.org/position-paper.

