



APTA, Hartford HealthCare Rehabilitation Network Launch Frailty Pilot to Inform Value-Based Payment Models with Real-World Data

The physical therapist-led model aims to change the trajectory of aging through earlier identification of frailty and prevention-focused care approaches.

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Washington, D.C., and Hartford, Conn. — The American Physical Therapy Association and the Hartford HealthCare Rehabilitation Network announce a partnership to evaluate and support APTA's Growing Older and Living Stronger™, or GOALS, model, an innovative, prevention-focused approach being implemented to identify frailty risk earlier in older adults and improve outcomes while generating real-world evidence to inform the future of value-based healthcare delivery and payment.

The joint quality-improvement initiative is being piloted within the Hartford HealthCare Rehabilitation Network, where physical therapists are implementing standardized screenings, functional assessments, and care coordination improvements to identify frailty risk earlier and intervene before falls, hospitalizations, or functional decline occur. The pilot will generate real-world data to evaluate clinical outcomes and operational performance, providing key evidence to support broader adoption of value-based payment models.

The announcement, made by leaders from both organizations at the APTA Payment Advocacy Summit in Portland, Oregon, underscores growing momentum to advance alternative payment models aligned with value-based healthcare. The GOALS model reflects APTA's broader efforts to implement prevention-focused, value-based care.

"The partnership between APTA and Hartford HealthCare represents a significant step forward in transforming how we think about aging and care delivery," said APTA President Kyle Covington, PT, DPT, PhD. "By leveraging the unique role of physical therapists to identify risk earlier and intervene proactively, we have an opportunity to improve health outcomes while demonstrating the value of prevention-driven care."

"Hartford HealthCare is proud to partner with the American Physical Therapy Association to develop and share an innovative approach to managing frailty," said Hartford HealthCare Community Network Vice President of Operations Chris Carlin, OTR/L, MBA. "By bringing together the strengths of both organizations, we have created a unique framework to proactively identify frailty and associated risks, align targeted interventions, and preserve individuals' independence and ability to age in place. This physical therapist-driven, value-based model is practical, impactful, and highly adaptable across the healthcare continuum."

Addressing Frailty Through Proactive, Physical Therapist–Led Care

Traditional care models often identify frailty too late, after costly and preventable health events. The GOALS model shifts care upstream by positioning physical therapists as essential providers responsible for early identification and intervention. This approach is designed to maintain mobility, preserve independence, and reduce avoidable healthcare utilization across the care continuum.

Building a Model for Value-Based Payment and Broader Adoption

APTA developed the GOALS model over the past several years, engaging with federal agencies, including the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation, as well as value-based healthcare providers and practices.

If successful, the pilot could serve as a model for broader adoption across a wide range of care settings, including independent practices, other integrated health systems, Medicare Advantage plans, accountable care organizations, and other risk-bearing entities working to advance value-based payment models. The GOALS Model was designed to demonstrate the important role physical therapists can play in value-based care and the health care delivery system, while also helping to establish new and innovative pathways for access to and payment for physical therapist services.

“We believe the GOALS model has the potential to reshape how healthcare systems approach aging populations,” said APTA Senior Payment Specialist Alice Bell, PT. “This model focuses on delivering the right care at the right time and with a focus on prevention and risk mitigation.”

Generating Evidence to Inform the Future of Value-Based Care

Formal results of the pilot are expected in late 2026, with full analysis anticipated in 2027. Insights from the program will generate real-world evidence to inform health care leaders, policymakers, and APTA members about operational and clinical strategies and advance value-based payment reform.

About APTA

The American Physical Therapy Association represents 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students nationwide. APTA advocates for the physical therapy profession, advances practice through education and research, and promotes policies that improve access to high-quality, cost-effective care to optimize movement and health.

About Hartford HealthCare

Hartford HealthCare is a not-for-profit healthcare system driven by a mission to improve the health and well-being of every community.

With 48,000 dedicated colleagues and a bold vision for the future, Hartford HealthCare is transforming healthcare across Connecticut and beyond, expanding access, improving affordability, advancing health equity, and delivering excellence in care.

Spanning more than 500 locations across 185 towns and cities, its comprehensive care-delivery system is designed to meet people where they are, every day. From world-class hospitals, including two tertiary-level teaching hospitals, an acute-care community teaching hospital, an acute-care hospital and trauma center, and four community hospitals, to an extensive network of behavioral health services, multispecialty physician groups, urgent and virtual care, surgery centers, home care, senior care, rehabilitation, and mobile neighborhood health programs, Hartford HealthCare is there when and where it matters most.

Each day, Hartford HealthCare touches the lives of more than 28,000 people, delivering coordinated, high-quality care through its unique Institute Model. This approach unites leading experts in neuroscience, cancer, digestive health, heart and vascular care, orthopedics, and urology and kidney health, ensuring patients receive consistent, advanced care at the most affordable cost.

Recognized nationally for patient safety and clinical excellence, Hartford HealthCare is the only health system in the country to receive the prestigious Quest for Quality Prize from the American Hospital Association. As a national leader in patient safety, all Hartford HealthCare hospitals earned 'A' Hospital Safety Grades from The Leapfrog Group in both 2023 and 2024, reflecting a longstanding commitment to safe, high-quality care.

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