
Principles of the American Physical Therapy Association

“Transforming society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience.” (APTA). This is the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) vision for all members and Physical Therapist. As a student, in a doctorate of physical therapy (DPT) program, I want to reflect on how that vision will advance my personal and professional development in my career path. There are many ways to impact and transform society. Clinicians of physical therapy strive to impact individual lives within a society by providing quality rehabilitation services that will better the quality of lives in our communities. As a physical therapy student, it is my duty to absorb the material from my courses so that I can render and advocate such a service. A physical therapist plays a vital role in our society because everyone ultimately falls victim to illness, injury, or will suffer from the wear and tear of their bodies as they age. These trails are not an individual challenge but more so a societal threat since these challenges will influence our friends and family and their interconnection with all of society.

The key focus is implementing rehabilitating treatments that would ameliorate the condition a patient is enduring and thereby impacting a patient’s life and their influencing circle. Going into my program, I had already envisioned myself in transforming individual lives in that manner. In my undergraduates, I studied Sociology for the very reason of wanting to be a part of bringing about societal changes and helping individual lives. I have been involved in some of the movements at Cal State San Marcos with my sociology honors club members.

As a student in a DPT program, I want to keep being a part of bringing changes in services or innovations that will revolutionize our industry and impact society. APTA states that “Movement is the key to optimal living and quality of life.” (APTA). Newton first law of motion states that an object in motion stays in motion and an object at rest stays at rest. Living things are built to move and sedentary life has shown to lead to adverse effects on the human body so it is safe to apply Newton’s law to human beings to some degree. People who are perpetually at rest tend to atrophy and “stay at rest”, while those in proper motion usually continue to be so.

To improve movement is to strengthen, increase the range of mobility, flexibility, function, and most importantly to reduce or eliminate pain. It is then understandable that optimizing an individual’s movement is one of the key aspects of our vision as PTs and students. It is my responsibility as a student to be able to understand how to identify diagnosable impairments in order to advocate optimal development from cradle to death. That would involve utilizing up to date evidence-based research and innovations to incorporate into my studies and future practice to render quality services that society may benefit from. Enhancing the human experience gives a visualization of how physical therapists can impact individual lives, families,

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and communities.

The California delegate Terrence M. Nordstrom, PT, EdD. gave a very touching speech (viewable on APTA.com) on his definition of what the human experience entails. The human experience is our connections with each other, experiences with loved ones or complete strangers, and lives that we impact. To enrich the human experience for our clients would be something along the lines of: rehabilitating clients so that they are independent enough to get out of bed to go buy groceries; it is making it so a grandparent is able to sit down on the floor with their grandchildren without any pain; it is creating possibilities to things that healthy individuals normally take for granted. To be part of something like that is a selfless and magical experience. Looking back on my experiences in life, I had always felt most successful and fulfilled when impacting the quality of another person's way of life for the better. To be able to add value to a person/family quality of life gives me the greater conviction of the integrity of my studies.

Reflecting on the APTA vision and its principles, I recognize how they align with my own goals and values. It is a compass that I can refer back to in shaping myself into my professional career path. The vision is something I can hold my studies and future practice to adhere to in order to provide exceptional valuable services to individuals and my community. I am evermore so honored to be part of such an organization after reviewing and reflect on their vision, principles, and core values.

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