PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSISTANT

Definition

Under the supervision of a Registered Physical Therapist, provides direct patient care using physical therapy modalities and procedures in accordance with orders from the patient’s physician.

Distinguishing Characteristics

The classification of Physical Therapy Assistant is licensed by the State of California and provides direct patient care activities under the direction and supervision of a Registered Physical Therapist.

Physical Therapy Assistant is distinguished from the classification of Physical Therapist by the latter’s responsibility to independently evaluate, plan and implement physical rehabilitation treatment programs requested by a physician and from the Physical Therapy Aide by the latter’s limitations regarding the provision of direct patient care activities.

Essential Functions

** Performs a program of corrective exercise and treatment for assigned patients under the direction of a Physical Therapist who has assessed and evaluated the patient. Monitors patients performing therapeutic exercise.

** Administers treatments such as exercise, gait training, massage, whirlpool, hot packs, diathermy, ultrasound, paraffin, ice packs and traction under supervision of the Physical Therapist.

** Observes patients undergoing treatment and reports unusual occurrences and physical condition of the patients to the Physical Therapist.

** Maintains appropriate communication with supervisor, physical therapy staff, patients and other hospital personnel.

** Follows appropriate documentation procedures and established guidelines to record information and maintain records of services provided.

** Participates in professional development through continuing education and in service training; monitors quality management issues.

** Maintains treatment areas and equipment in proper working order.
** Dependent upon area of practice or department assignments, demonstrates clinical knowledge and skill in the care of the newborn, infant, toddler, child, adolescent, adult and geriatric patient ranging up to 100+ years of age.

Other Functions

** Assists in scheduling physical therapy services and coordinating physical therapy with other types of services provided.

** Assists in performing tests and evaluations to establish treatment goals and chart patient progress.

** Assists in explaining orthopedic recommendations and their benefits; provides instructions to patients and their relatives.

** Performs other job-related duties as required.

Employment Standards

Graduation from an accredited program and/or approval by the Physical Therapy Examining Committee of the State Board of Medical Quality Assurance.

Current licensure to practice as a Physical Therapy Assistant in California.

Applicants who have successfully completed an accredited program and/or who have applied but have not yet taken the exam for licensure shall be identified as “license applicant” and must pass the Physical Therapy Assistant examination during their probationary period in order to comply with state guidelines. Failure to pass this examination within the probationary period will result in termination.

Possession and maintenance of a current American Heart Association Healthcare Provider Basic Life Support (BLS) card. Appointees not possessing the BLS card must successfully complete appropriate training and qualify for the BLS card within 60 days of employment.

Knowledge of: principles and methods of physical therapy and the roles of the Physical Therapist and the Physical Therapy Assistant; objectives of physical therapy treatment; human anatomy and physiology; various types of physical therapy treatments and procedures; operation and care of various types of physical therapy equipment.

Ability to: use and care for orthopedic appliances and special equipment; explain and teach administer physical therapy treatments and procedures to others; keep records of case histories and prepare reports; communicate effectively with patients and staff.

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