

OFFICIAL STATEMENT

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PHYSICAL THERAPISTS & NCS/EMG

NCS/EMG is widely accepted and recognized as being a professional service that is within the scope of physical therapist practice. The physical therapist has the academic and clinical knowledge to perform NCS/EMG testing safely and competently. The Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) requires instruction in electrophysiological testing in the basic professional education curriculum. Furthermore, a mechanism to recognize advanced clinical competence in electrophysiological testing has been in place through the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS) since 1985.

Physical therapists clearly have both the education and training to perform NCS/EMG testing in a safe and competent manner. No evidence to the contrary exists

APTA HOUSE OF DELEGATES POSITION ON EMG

ELECTROPHYSIOLOGIC EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION HOD P06-96-20-04

Electrophysiologic examinations and evaluations as practiced by physical therapists encompass both the professional and technical components of the observation, recording, analysis, and interpretation of bioelectric muscle and nerve potentials, detected by means of surface or needle electrodes, for the purpose of evaluating the integrity of the neuromuscular system.

Electrophysiologic evaluations include, but are not limited to, clinical electromyography, motor and sensory nerve conduction studies, and other evoked potential procedures.

Independent, safe, effective, and efficient electrophysiologic examinations and evaluations by physical therapists include the following:

- *Establishing appropriate rapport with each patient/client.*
- *Conducting a history and systems review in order to plan an appropriate electrophysiologic examination and evaluation.*
- *Documenting the electrophysiologic examination results.*
- *Analyzing and interpreting the findings of the electrophysiologic examination.*
- *Communicating examination procedures and results of evaluation to the appropriate individuals.*

The professional education of the physical therapist includes gross anatomy, neuroanatomy, muscle and nerve physiology, clinical neurology, myology, pathology, physical and clinical sciences of electrophysiologic examination and evaluation, clinical practice experience, and provides the knowledge base for the independent performance of electrophysiologic examinations and evaluations.

FACTS ABOUT PHYSICAL THERAPISTS AND NCS/EMG

Physical Therapists are cost effective providers of EMG services.

In a 2004 study published in *Muscle and Nerve*, physical therapists were reimbursed at an average rate of \$84 for EMG services, whereas physicians are reimbursed \$500 for the same service. Physical therapists provide quality studies and have high compliance rates for following NCS/EMG clinical guidelines.

Physical Therapists are recognized by all major payers, including Medicare.

Medicare, the largest payer in the United States, reimburses for NCS/EMG provided by physical therapists. On April 19, 2001, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued Program Memorandum B-01-28, which states that physical therapists who are board-certified in clinical electrophysiology by the ABPTS may perform, and be reimbursed for, NCS/EMG without the supervision of a physician. In September 2001, CMS expanded this policy to cover NCS/EMG services provided by physical therapists who are not ABPTS certified if they had provided NCS/EMG services to Medicare patients prior to May 1, 2001.

Physical Therapists who perform NCS/EMG pose no greater risk to patient safety than other providers.

CNA, the underwriting company for the professional liability insurance company Healthcare Providers Service Organization, reviewed their claims database and found no claims that cited NCS/EMG performed by physical therapists as the cause of injury. Furthermore, there have been no complaints by patients or incidents of malpractice on the part of physical therapists that would warrant removal of the privilege of practicing NCS/EMG.

Physical Therapists are qualified to perform NCS/EMG

CAPTE instruction in electrophysiological testing is in the basic professional education curriculum. NCS/EMG is described as part of physical therapy practice of tests and measurements in all four practice areas of the *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*. Minimum eligibility requirements for ABPTS certification in Clinical Electrophysiology require 2,000 hours of direct patient care in the specialty area within the last 10 years, 25% (500) of which must have occurred within the last three (3) years. The applicant must include evidence of performing a minimum of 500 complete electroneuromyography examinations during those hours.

HELPFUL REFERENCES

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4. R1725B3. Section 2070 - 2070.1 Diagnostic X-Ray, Diagnostic Laboratory, and Other Diagnostic Tests. Sept 2001.
<http://www.cms.gov/Transmittals/2001Trans/itemdetail.asp?filterType=dual,%20keyword&filterValue=R1725B3&filterByDID=0&sortByDID=3&sortOrder=descending&itemID=CMS042397&intNumPerPage=10>
5. APTA. Guide to Physical Therapist Practice. 2nd Revised ed. Alexandria, VA. APTA. 2001.