

## **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF A PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT**

The following information is provided to assist the student in better understanding the demands of the PTA program and profession, and the abilities needed to successfully and safely complete the classroom, laboratory and clinical competencies of the curriculum.

1. **Communication:** The student must be able to read, write, see, speak and hear and interpret both written and verbal communication in English. The student must be able to communicate effectively, appropriately and sensitively with patients and health care providers.
2. **Motor:** The student must be able to perform complex motor skills necessary to provide therapeutic intervention and emergency treatment to patients and possess the necessary physical strength to transfer, ambulate, and reposition patients safely. The student must have sufficient gross and fine motor functions to assess patients through palpation and manual muscle testing.
3. **Observation:** The student must be able to observe and interpret signs and symptoms visually, auditory, and tactilely for the purpose of appropriate assessment and treatment. Appropriate observation skills will enable the student to discern normal from abnormal in order to determine a safe and appropriate course of action.
4. **Intellectual/Analytical:** The student must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze and evaluate and synthesize demands of a physical therapist assistant and need to be performed in an efficient and timely manner. The student should also be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures
5. **Behavioral:** The student must be able to function effectively under stress and in changing educational and work environments with appropriate professional behaviors. The exercise of sound, professional judgment and the ability to be flexible are also necessary. Common sense, compassion, integrity, honesty, sincere concern and respect for others, interpersonal skills and self-motivation are all qualities necessary for success in the physical therapy profession.

The working PTA must be capable of long periods of concentration in selecting correct techniques, equipment and safety measures to assure maximum care and safety of the patient. Therefore, the student must be able to exercise independent judgement under both routine and emergency conditions. A person abusing alcohol or conscious-altering drugs could not meet these criteria. The following core performance standards have been adopted by the PTA program. Admission to and progression in the PTA program are not based on these standards but should be used to assist the student in determining whether accommodations or modifications are necessary. If a student believes that one or more of the standards cannot be met without accommodation or modification, the student should contact the school's Section 504 Coordinator.

In addition to the abilities listed above, the following learning and psychomotor skills will be required to be demonstrated:

**Cognitive Learning Skills:** the student must be able to demonstrate the following abilities:

1. Retain and use information in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domain in order to treat patients.
2. Perform a physical therapy assessment of a patient's posture and movement including analysis of physical, biomechanical, and environmental factors in a timely manner, consistent with the acceptable norms of all clinical settings.
3. Use information to execute physical therapy treatment in a timely manner appropriate for the problems identified and consistent with the acceptable norms of all clinical settings.
4. Reassess the treatment plan as needed for effective and efficient management of physical therapy problems in a timely manner, consistent with the acceptable norms of all clinical settings.

**Affective Learning Skills:** the student must be able to demonstrate the following abilities:

1. Demonstrate appropriate affective behaviors and mental attitudes in order to not jeopardize the emotional, physical, mental, and behavioral safety of patients and other individuals with whom one interacts in the academic and clinical setting and to follow the ethical standards of the American Physical Therapy Association.
2. Cope with the mental and emotional rigors of a demanding educational program in physical therapy that includes academic and clinical components that occur with set time constraints and often concurrently.
3. Acknowledge and respect individual values and opinions in order to foster harmonious working relationships with colleagues, peers and patients.

Psychomotor Skills: the student must be able to demonstrate the following skills:

1. Standing and/or walking up to seven hours throughout an eight and/or 12-hour shift.
2. Bending, crouching, or stooping several times per hour.
3. Lifting and carrying a minimum of 30 pounds several times per hour.
4. Lifting and moving up to a 300 lb. patient in a 2 to 3-person transfer.
5. Reaching overhead, above the shoulder at 90 degrees.
6. Pushing and/or pulling objects and equipment weighing up to 300 lbs.
7. Utilizing eyesight to observe patients, manipulate equipment and accessories
8. Hearing to communicate with the patient and health care team.
9. Utilizing sufficient verbal and written skills to effectively and promptly communicate in English with the patient and healthcare team.
10. Manipulating medical equipment and accessories, including but not limited to switches, knobs, buttons, and keyboards, utilizing fine and gross motor skills.
11. Performing the assigned training related tasks/skills responsibilities with the intellectual and emotional function necessary to ensure patient safety and exercise independent judgment and discretion.
12. Utilizing the above standards/functions to respond promptly to the patient needs and/or emergency situations.