

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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## TEAM IOWA TRIUMPHS! LANDMARK GAINS FOR PHYSICAL THERAPIST REFERRAL PRIVILEGES AND RHODE ISLAND IS ACCORDED AN EXTENSION ON RADIOGRAPH REFERRAL

### Cherished Members of the Mighty Imaging SIG!

Last we talked, I left you hanging in anticipation of Iowa's impending legislative victory for unfettered Physical Therapist imaging referral. Well, Iowa APTA chapter president Kory Zimney confirmed that Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds signed it into law, and we are over the moon about this! The law, in its elegant clarity, reads:

*Physical therapy permits the referral of a patient by a physical therapist for diagnostic imaging, including House File 174, p. 2, plain radiographs and magnetic resonance imaging, provided the diagnostic imaging is performed, and the results are interpreted by an appropriately licensed and qualified health care professional. The physical therapist who ordered the diagnostic imaging shall report the results of the diagnostic imaging to the patient's designated primary care provider within seven days following receipt of the results to ensure patient coordination of care, unless the patient does not have a designated primary care provider or the health care professional who performed and interpreted the diagnostic imaging previously provided the results to the primary care provider.*

Kory will speak to Iowa's triumph at our next Imaging SIG membership meeting to deconstruct this landmark advance in physical therapy's drive toward increasingly autonomous practice. The path to success was not without its twists and turns, but team Iowa skillfully navigated pitfalls with excellent preparation and armed to the teeth with evidence. They deftly communicated the current realities of the doctor of physical therapy's education and explained the compelling opportunities for improved health care for the Hawkeye state. And he indeed didn't shrink from his duty to dispel mischaracterizations offered by combative stakeholders.

I am tempted to use the boilerplate statement that Kory and his team 'rose to the occasion,' but it takes more. I have come to use another couple of expressions: 'Luck favors the prepared,' and the sobering, 'we sink to our lowest level of preparation.'

Iowa's ground game prep involved an ongoing and engaged convivial relationship with legislators, passing disability placard and crossbow permit legislation which logically recognized physical therapists as licensed healthcare professionals who can step in to evaluate and approve of both. These pieces of legislation relieve clinical practitioners of largely unbillable service, which piles on extra work on providers already stressed by physician and nursing shortages.

Team Iowa introduced the initiative, armed with supportive

evidence for their legislative push with help from the Imaging SIG. Dr. Zimney thought it would take 3-4 years and is amazed that it took a year!

I'm amazed, but maybe I shouldn't be. Since stepping into the president's role, I have stated that the evidence is clear and piling up regarding our record of imaging selection appropriateness, cost saving, safety, superior musculoskeletal management, institutional precedent, and CAPTE-mandated imaging content of our doctoral education.

But legislative advances and state board inquiries have to be deliberate and prepared. I implore anyone interested in advancing the cause and exploring their passions for imaging referral advocacy; I ask only this: Please consult with us and arm yourself with the evidence that we can provide you. And if you have more evidence and experience to supplement us with, we eagerly accept the collaboration!

I'm looking forward to and hope you can join us to unravel and deconstruct our Hawkeye advocates' journey on September 14 at 6 p.m. EST with Kory Zimney.

Meanwhile, there's good news from Rhode Island. Ocean State Physical Therapists have been accorded another couple of years to order radiographs. They are focused on chronicling their use and appropriateness of physical therapy imaging referral to gain additional favor and permanency of the law. We wish these passionate advocates good fortune in their ongoing campaign for full imaging access. I am personally dumbfounded that legislators allow us to recommend and refer for imaging modalities that generate ionizing radiation but cannot trust us with the comparatively benign MRI (enter face-palm with sigh here).

Here's the current State of PT Imaging referrals in the United States explicitly allowing us to order imaging studies:

### 1. *The Current State of Physical Therapist-Directed Imaging Law and State Board Rulings*

Eleven states presently have enacted laws or state board rulings explicitly mentioning PT-directed Imaging referral, 7 of which have accorded physical therapists full imaging privileges, and the 4 remaining limiting referrals to radiography (X-ray). It is noteworthy that legislative deliberations, which have limited physical therapists to radiography referral, have been based on cost concerns associated with advanced imaging as opposed to ionizing radiation exposure to patients.

To recapitulate:

#### Iowa State Law

- Most recently, in May 2023, the state of Iowa conferred full imaging referral privileges to Physical Therapists.
- In Iowa, physical therapists can order imaging studies, including MRIs.

#### Colorado Physical Therapy Board Policy

- In Colorado, physical therapists can order imaging studies, including MRIs, as directed by a Colorado Physical Therapy Licensing Board policy.

#### Utah Radiology Law

- The *Utah Radiologic Technologist, Radiologic Assistant, and Radiology Practical Technician Licensing Act* governs the ability of physical therapists to order imaging studies in the state. Under the act, radiological technologists, assistants, and technicians can accept orders from physical therapists for x-rays and MRIs.

#### District of Columbia Board Ruling

- In a 2010 letter, the District of Columbia Board of Physical Therapy clarified its ruling that physical therapists can order diagnostic imaging studies.

#### New Jersey State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners Ruling

- In a 2016 public session, the New Jersey Board of Physical Therapy Examiners clarified that physical therapists can refer patients for diagnostic testing, such as imaging studies.

#### West Virginia Board of Physical Therapy Advisory Opinion

- In 2021, the West Virginia Board of Physical Therapy issued a written opinion, advisory in nature, that physical therapists may refer a patient to a radiologist (eg, order imaging), with clinical justification, for any diagnostic imaging study within the recognized standards of the practice and education for a physical therapist.

#### Maryland Board of Physical Therapy Examiners Ruling

- In a 2014 letter, the Maryland Board of Physical Therapy Examiners clarified its ruling that physical therapists are permitted to order imaging studies, including X-rays, MRIs, and CT scans.

#### Wisconsin Physical Therapy Licensure Law

- Wisconsin's physical therapy practice act permits physical therapists to order X-rays. Detailed regulations require physical therapists to complete a formal X-ray ordering training program with demonstrated physician involvement and to communicate and coordinate with the patient's primary care physician or appropriate health care provider when ordering X-rays, with some exceptions.

#### North Dakota Century Code

- North Dakota's practice act, revised in 2021, permits physical therapists to order X-rays.

#### Rhode Island Public Law

- Rhode Island law, enacted in 2021, permits physical therapists to order X-rays. The legislation requires physical therapists who order imaging report results within 7 days of receipt to the patient's primary care physician if they have one. It also requires managed health plans to provide a utilization report to the legislature annually starting in 2022. The RI law has recently been reauthorized for another 2 years in 2023.

#### Arizona Senate Bill 1312

- Arizona passed legislation in 2022 permitting physical therapists to order X-rays. The physical therapist ordering the x-rays must report the results to the patient's health care practitioner of record.

## MSKUS HIGHLIGHTS

Physical therapists continue to test their mettle in musculoskeletal ultrasound imaging by sitting for the gold standard APCA (Inteleos' Alliance for Physician Certification and Advancement) diagnostic MSKUS credential, namely the RMSK. It is a board exam that requires much preparation and promises much professional reward. It shows the diagnostic imaging world that we physical therapists can manage just fine in the world of diagnostic musculoskeletal ultrasound imaging compared to our physician, chiropractic, nurse practitioner, and physician's assistant colleagues. We have added a modest but solid 3 new RMSK physical

therapists to the total. And we physical therapists are thrilled to embrace and apply MSKUS to our practices. Physical therapists realize that this is a game changer for primary autonomous physical therapy practice and our collective professional relevance. I will repeat my call to action reminding everyone to study MSKUS and sit for the RMSK:

WHO is next to subject themselves to the crucible of this physician credential of the RMSK? As I have parroted repeatedly, if you want to show that we rival the MSK diagnostic acumen of other diagnostic professions, this is a compelling way to do it. My dear PT colleagues, we need to take advantage of this opportunity, and we need MORE body count to (i) study this excellent imaging modality, (ii) use it, (iv) study for the RMSK exam... and (v) pass it! Let's make MSKUS our own!

Remember! Physical therapists are recognized providers of musculoskeletal ultrasonography by the Inteleos Foundation family of certification alliances: the Alliance for Physician Certification and Accreditation (APCA), the American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (ARDMS), and the Point-of-Care Ultrasound Certification Academy (POCUS). Pertinently, physical therapists are eligible for the gold-standard physician's board certification of the APCA-conferred RMSK distinction, which many physical therapists have achieved, as well as the POCUS certifications in MSKUS and other point-of-care applications.

Moreover, the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM) recognizes physical therapists as licensed medical providers of Musculoskeletal ultrasound. The AIUM, the home of the *Journal of Ultrasound in Medicine*, is a multidisciplinary association dedicated to advancing the use of ultrasound in medicine through professional and public education, research, development of guidelines, and accreditation.

### **Another Physical Therapist Content Creator for AIUM: Dr. Fred Loeffler, DPT, Navigates to the Pediatric Knee!**

Special Thanks to Pediatric MSKUS Pioneer Fred Loeffler, PT, DPT, LAT, ATC, CLT, for a phenomenal webinar for the AIUM titled, *Navigating the Pediatric Knee with MSKUS*, which can be seen on demand at the AIUM's learning center. Part 2 of our MSKUS pediatric series will continue with Tiffany Kaltenmark, PT, DPT, who will present on the pediatric ankle, and part 3 will be with Stacie Akins, PT, MHS, who will present on the elbow. Akins and Kaltenmark are incredible and experienced superusers of MSKUS, and you will benefit from their perspectives, insights, and workflows. And finally, the AOPT's I-SIG and the AIUM are enthusiastic to present Stephen Ramsey, PT, DPT, CCS, for a 2-part webinar series on PT-administered Cardiopulmonary Ultrasound Imaging. You missed out if you didn't check out his presentation at CSM 2023 in San Diego. But you have another chance, as Dr. Ramsey will reveal ultrasound imaging's impact and relevance to the crucial cardiopulmonary specialty of physical therapy. I will get dates and times ready for you when we lock them in.

### **Save the Date for the Fall 2023 Membership I-SIG Meeting!**

We are delighted to speak with Iowa's APTA chapter president Korey Zimney, who has agreed to talk to our membership Thursday, September 14, 2023, at 6 p.m. EST (5 p.m. CST, 4 p.m. MT, or 3 p.m. PST). Please join us, and let's learn from the Iowa

experience. We'll also be hearing from our leadership and discussing issues of the day!

### **A Return to Our Annual In-person Imaging SIG Meeting at CSM 2024 in Boston!**

CSM 2024 is around the corner as the road show rumbles into the cradle of liberty. I look forward to rubbing elbows with our Bay State colleagues and hearing what they have to share about their professional aspirations. The Imaging SIG Meeting will occur on Saturday, February 15, from 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

That's all for now, you Physical Therapy MSKUS imagers and Physical Therapy imaging referral aspirants. Continue to beat the deafening drums for autonomous modern physical therapy practice, proudly proclaim our unique skill sets to all-comers, and don't shrink in the face of false narratives and misinformed mischaracterizations. We play nice, but we don't back down...we represent! We got this!

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