



Academy of Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Advocacy Grant Final Report

CHAPTER: California

DATE OF FINAL REPORT: August 7, 2020

AMOUNT AWARDED: \$5,000

NAME OF CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVE SUBMITTING FINAL REPORT:

Rick Katz, PT, DPT, MA

President, California Physical Therapy Association

CPTA has provided consistent financial support toward advocating for physical therapists in animal rehabilitation (AR). The chapter devoted more than \$30,000 over the past eight years on contract lobbyist fees (\$8,250/monthly), staff and content expert travel expenses (\$5,000), PR communications (\$1,000), and (\$8,000) in staff wages. CPTA allocated funds in its 2018-2020 budget for the following expenses: staff wages, contract lobbyist retainers, travel expense reimbursement for staff, consultants, lobbyists and volunteer representatives to attend every California Veterinary Medical Board (CVMB) and CVMB Animal Rehabilitation Task Force Meeting.

CPTA's staff and lobbyist have spoken before all relevant CVMB Meetings and legislative hearings. The Chapter staff have supported the CAAPT's grassroots efforts by helping to collect and collate letters and petition signatures collected by the group, in addition to using its own communication channels to launch a statewide grassroots campaign on this very important issue. CPTA and CAAPT were invited to provide representation on the California Veterinary Medical Board's Animal Rehabilitation Task Force. The purpose of the task force was to create provisions for the regulation of animal rehabilitation in California. It was very important that we participate in this process to ensure that the resulting language was in the best interest of the PT Profession and California consumers of animal rehabilitation. Participation on this task force covered the 2016-2017 calendar years. CPTA and CAAPT were responsible for the travel costs for our representatives to attend these meetings as well. Regulations that were mutually agreed upon by both interest groups were accepted by the Task Force, but voted down by the Veterinary Medical Board when presented in April 2017.

CPTA's Political Action Committee (CAL-PT-PAC) encouraged physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and others to take an active and effective role in government policies that may have an impact on the practice of physical therapy in California. CAL-PT-PAC continues to educate California Legislators about Animal Rehabilitation while highlighting the point that AR is a specialty niche of animal healthcare, which is not included in the standard Veterinarian or Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) curriculum.

Our PAC has created long-standing relationships with California legislators and their staff who now better understand that requiring a physical therapist with advanced training in animal rehabilitation to work under the direct supervision of a veterinarian, who may or may not have any rehabilitation training, would only serve to add an extra layer of expense to the owner of the animal patient without adding any extra medical or safety benefit to that patient's quality of care. Legislators are concerned that allowing any RVT to render rehabilitation services for which they may have no qualifications is potentially dangerous to the animals they are treating. In the human world, this would be the equivalent of requiring a licensed physical therapist to work under the direct supervision of any MD, and allowing RNs or PAs with no rehabilitation training to render physical therapy services under the direct supervision of an MD.

CAL-PT-PAC is currently working on its 2021 legislative budget and is dedicated to allocating significant support for incumbent and newly elected state legislators who are passionate about this important issue amongst others that affect the practice of physical therapy. CPTA and CAAPT collaborated on AB 3013 in 2018 which would have allowed the practice of animal rehabilitation by a PT. The bill failed in committee and did not return in 2019-2020. Both groups are actively pursuing a potential bill for 2021. We plan to re-launch a major grassroots campaign which will include call-to-action email alerts, requests for letters and phone calls to targeted legislators and their staff.

The California Veterinary Medical Board (VMB) has worked on proposed language to regulate the practice of animal rehabilitation for the past fourteen years. In addition, legislative efforts initiated by the California Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) and California Veterinary Medical Board (VMB) have also been attempted that would have negatively affected the profession of physical therapists in this specialty area (AB 1980, Hayashi 2010); however, the harmful language was removed prior to the bill's passage.

The California Physical Therapy Association (CPTA) has worked on this issue in California since its infancy. For many years, we have advocated on the issue by hosting an organized letter writing campaign while submitting PT, veterinarian, and consumer letters to the legislature and the VMB, traveled to and testified at public hearings and during public comment discussions of VMB Meetings, attended all VMB Meetings at which animal rehabilitation was on the agenda, including their Sunset Review Hearing, updated the California Physical Therapy Board on the issue, provided conference call phone resources for our ally groups to conduct preparatory meetings and tracked and collated hundreds of letters collected by our allies in this fight, the California Association of Animal Physical Therapists (CAAPT).

The CAAPT is a grassroots organization comprised of physical therapists with advanced training in animal rehabilitation. To date, the CAAPT has worked tirelessly and played an integral role in stopping the California VMB's attempts to pass regulatory and legislative language that would have resulted in: a) restricting the ability of animal rehabilitation physical therapy professionals to practice their craft, b) restricting consumer choice and c) limiting access to qualified non-veterinarian rehabilitation practitioners.

The CAAPT has held off the efforts of the VMB by attending every VMB meeting over the past eight years where Animal Rehabilitation has been on the agenda for discussion, gathered thousands of signatures in opposition, garnered hundreds of letters in opposition, obtained legal advice and submitted a threat of litigation from CAAPT's lawyer to the VMB for potential restraint of trade/anti-trust in accordance with the U.S. Supreme Court: North Carolina Dental Examiners vs. Federal Trade Commission should the Board continue to promulgate a direct supervision mandate. As a result of the CAAPT and CPTA's collective efforts, the VMB's pursuit of

regulatory language was halted at the request of the California State Legislature as of October 2015.

The VMB's most recent 2020 iteration of regulatory language will require direct supervision of physical therapists practicing animal rehabilitation in all practice settings regardless of their level of training and expertise in the specialty field of rehabilitation. Furthermore, any Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) working for a veterinarian would have been allowed to practice Animal Rehab, with no required education or training in rehabilitation techniques.

CPTA, along with CAAPT, seeks to take a leading role in defining appropriate regulatory or legislative language to protect the qualified physical therapy professionals ability to practice their skill set while protecting the consumers' right to choose who they want to treat their own pets. We also strive for protecting animal safety through mandatory educational standards for those who practice in the specialty niche of animal rehabilitation.

CPTA and CAAPT will need to continue to participate in the regulatory process, and plan to support legislation in the near future with CAAPT as the primary sponsor and CPTA offering financial and staff support. Introducing legislation will require travel to meetings, staff, and lobbyist time, and potential deployment of our grassroots to advocate on the issue, which could include paying for interested persons to attend relevant meetings and hearings for the next two to four years.