

Guidelines for Submission - Innovative Practice Award

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- Practice Setting: Private Practice
- Innovation Name: The Alaska Physical Therapy Community Clinic: The First Pro Bono Physical Therapy Clinic Sponsored by the APTA

Practice Innovation Description:

Within the Innovation Description section of your application, please outline the following components:

- Description of Practice Innovation: APTA-Alaska has developed the first pro bono physical therapy clinic that is sponsored, managed and staffed by members of the APTA. The Alaska Physical Therapy Community Clinic originated as one location in Anchorage, and has now expanded to two more locations in Wasilla and Fairbanks, with plans to open a location in Homer. The locations are donated one to two times a week by local private practice facilities.
- Application of Practice Innovation: Physical therapy services are provided biweekly at 3 locations across Alaska to individuals who have financial barriers to care. There have 90+ new patients evaluated, and 400+ total patient encounters since opening our first location in Anchorage in December 2022.
- What makes it innovative? Offering pro bono care is consistent with the APTA's core values, however, no such care has ever been offered by the APTA. Existing pro bono clinics are commonly associated with an academic PT program or community health center. In response to unique circumstances in Alaska that don't allow for this traditional pro bono care, APTA-Alaska developed a state chapter-affiliated pro bono clinic in December 2022.
- Unique Attributes of the Innovation: This is the first pro bono service to be provided by a state chapter of the APTA. Members of APTA-Alaska achieved non-profit status for the clinic and appointed a Board of Directors which includes a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Clinic Director and Administrative Director. The hosting private practice clinic offers only their clinic space. Staffing, scheduling and all clinic operations are managed primarily by the Clinic Director. The Board of Directors meets quarterly. This same format can be applied in other states to help more individuals with financial barriers to health care receive PT services.

- **Impact on the Profession:** We recently conducted a survey to gather and analyze qualitative data regarding the perceived impact of APTA-Alaska's pro bono clinic on its patient population, as well as current APTA-Alaska members and community members. Among non-patient respondents, 23.3% have volunteered with the Community Clinic. Non-patient respondents nearly unanimously believe that other states could benefit from their own APTA State-Chapter affiliated pro bono clinic (97%).
- **Impact/Relevance of Practice Innovation to Patient Care/Treatment:** The results of our qualitative surveys demonstrate that the Community Clinic fills a void for underinsured patients seeking necessary PT services. 72.2% of patient responders reported that they would not have pursued care if the Community Clinic was not available. PT is often the first line of defense against musculoskeletal injuries in promoting optimal healing and without access to this, many will go on to develop chronic pain, which carries with it even greater hardship including decline in quality of life and increased financial burdens. With our current clinic operations, we are undoubtedly helping Alaskans. This model can and should be implemented in other states, as it has the potential of making a far greater impact across the nation.
- **Outcomes of the Practice Innovation:** Based on our survey results, all patients found the Community Clinic's services to be "helpful/very helpful" and most were "very likely" to recommend the clinic to others (88.9%). Non-patient respondents nearly unanimously believe that other states could benefit from their own APTA State-Chapter affiliated pro bono clinic (97%). The Community Clinic was also recently celebrated by the Community Impact Awards and named as one of the top 50 non-profit organizations that the public voted for having made a profound difference in the lives of Alaskans, and is currently in the running for the top 20.
- **Cost of Innovation:** From January 1 to June 30, 2024 the total cost for operating expenses was \$1,233.20. This was spent primarily on mutual insurance coverage, professional liability reimbursement, and website fees. All costs were covered by private individual donations. Since opening in December 2022, total expenses have been \$4,042.88, which have been paid for by donations and fund raisers.
- **Training Required for Utilizing the Innovation:** Those providing care are licensed physical therapists, therefore no clinical training is required. New volunteer clinicians are provided with a brief orientation of the clinic to learn the process for operations. Support staff volunteers are instructed in scheduling appointments, intake paperwork, and chart management.

- Justify AOPT funding this Innovation: The Community Clinic is seeking additional finances to help sustainability and ensuring our work continues consistently, even if participants move on. While all volunteer, we would like to grow our finances enough to have an amount set aside that would allow us to fund a position for a transition period should a key volunteer no longer be available.
- Benefit(s)/Value to Clinical Practice: Alaska has unique socioeconomic and geographic characteristics, however, the demand and need for pro bono therapy services is not unique. Millions across the country are uninsured or underinsured. This model can and should serve as a blueprint for others to follow in our footsteps and expand access to care across the country.