



WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF PHYSICAL THERAPY
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OPINION OF THE WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF PHYSICAL THERAPY
REGARDING IMAGING REFERRAL¹

I. Introduction

The Board has been presented with an inquiry from the West Virginia Physical Therapy Association to determine whether medical imaging referrals is permitted under the West Virginia Board of Physical Therapy's laws and regulations. The Board issues this opinion as the body authorized by the West Virginia Legislature to regulate the practice of physical therapy in this State. The Board has reviewed information regarding medical imaging referral.

II. Discussion

The Board first examines the definition of the practice of "physical therapy" under state statute. West Virginia Code §30-20-8, Scope of practice of a physical therapist, provides in pertinent part:

- (1) A physical therapist may refer a patient to an appropriate health care practitioner if the physical therapist has reasonable cause to believe that symptoms or conditions are present that require services beyond the scope of the practice of physical therapy

¹This opinion is advisory in nature. It does not constitute an administrative rule or regulation and is intended to solely serve as a guideline for persons licensed by the West Virginia Board of Physical Therapy.

²As of October 2021, seven state boards of physical therapy and the District of Columbia board of physical therapy have expressly permitted PTs to refer patients for imaging. Of them, four via explicit state statutes, and four are via physical therapy licensure board rules, policies, or opinions.

TRAINING STANDARDS

The Board recommends that licensees who refer patients to a radiologist provide evidence of one (1) of the following when requested by the WVBOPT.

- Graduate of a CAPTE accredited Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) that included imaging education.
- Evidence of post-entry-level imaging training (e.g., t-DPT, DSc).
- Completion of an ABPTS residency/fellowship program that included clinical imaging.
- Completion of a minimum of 15 contact hours of post-entry-level continuing education in clinical imaging from a CAPTE accredited institution, APTA component or affiliate (e.g., AOPT, FAAOMPT), or any WVBOPT approved course from a reputable education provider that includes instruction in the following areas:
 - Clinical imaging terminology
 - Factors affecting resolution, quality, and interpretation of clinical imaging
 - Indications and contraindications for clinical imaging
 - American College of Radiology (ACR) Appropriateness Criteria
 - Sign/symptoms and red flags requiring emergent referral for imaging

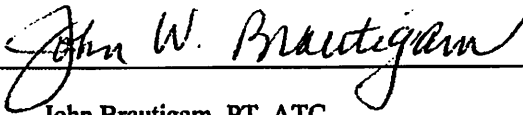
- Evidence based guidelines for the application of imaging modalities
- Clinical response and follow-up on imaging results.

Therefore, the Board is of the opinion that a licensed physical therapist in West Virginia may refer a patient to a radiologist (e.g., order imaging), with clinical justification, for any diagnostic imaging study, which is within the recognized standards of the practice and education (including education in imaging) for a physical therapist. In summary, the Board is of the opinion that imaging referral is within the scope of the practice of "physical therapy" as defined by West Virginia Code §30-20-8

III. Conclusion

As the agency authorized by the West Virginia Legislature to regulate the practice of physical therapy in this State, the Board is empowered to interpret its statutes and regulations. In summary, the Board is of the opinion that imaging referral is within the scope of the practice of "physical therapy" as defined by West Virginia Code §30-20-8.

West Virginia Board of Physical Therapy

By: 

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Board Chair

Dated: December 22, 2021