

## *Following the Social Contract of Physical Therapy*

Does our current health care structure effectively meet the physical therapy needs for all? Are some patients unable to receive the care they need due to financial limitations or geographic locations? Are physical therapy services readily available to all?

*“Social responsibility begins with meeting the needs for all individuals.”*

These are just a few questions, Gail M. Jensen PhD, PT, FAPAT encourages physical therapists to ponder. She recently gave the McMillan lecture at the 2011 APTA annual meeting and presented on the topic of societal health needs at the 2011 APTA Combined Sections Meetings held in New Orleans in February.

Jensen isn't the only one calling for greater social responsibility. The Vatican also recently weighed in on the need for businesses to embrace social responsibility. According to the *Catholic Review*, the Vatican's secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone said at the recent Executive Summit on Ethics for the Business World that there is no way businesses can remain ethically neutral. He called for business leaders to see their work as a part of a social contract with society.

To meet the ever-changing landscape of societal health needs, Jensen defined three areas of focus. The first is to follow the APTA code of ethics with emphasis on the principle of respecting the inherent dignity and rights of all individuals. Respect, compassion and integrity are at the foundation of this principle. General guidelines provided by the APTA state APTA states physical therapists should treat individuals with respect regardless of age, ethnic background social or economic standing, health condition or disability.

The second principle highlighted by Jensen is the need to adhere to a social contract that strives to meet health needs locally, nationally and globally. She encourages physical therapists to take the time to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged individuals and work to reduce health disparities. Several physical therapists have taken this effort to heart with their work at free health clinics across the United States or by

*“To support future health care needs, physical therapists need to advocate for the common good for all”*

volunteering their time and expertise in developing countries like Haiti.

The final area of focus described by Jensen is that of social responsibility. Jensen encourages physical therapists to remember that health is more than just health care. Where a patient lives, his job and living conditions can override the importance of seeking proper health care. Social responsibility takes a look at changing health conditions in addition to providing health care. She encourages physical therapists to be empathetic and understand where the patient is coming from and how the physical therapy profession can help influence health conditions in the community.

*To learn more about the physical therapy social contract listen to a full podcast with Gail M. Jensen PhD, PT, FAPAT at PTTalker.com.*

Additional Sources:

Glatz, Carol. “Vatican Calls on Businesses to be Ethical, Create Economic Justice.” Catholic Review Magazine, 19 June 2011.  
<http://www.catholicreview.org/subpages/storyworldnew-new.aspx?action=10155>

APTA Code of Ethics for the Physical Therapist  
[http://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/About\\_Us/Policies/HOD/Ethics/CodeofEthics.pdf](http://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/About_Us/Policies/HOD/Ethics/CodeofEthics.pdf)



## About the Author

After helping design and market the first preventative knee brace for football players as an Athletic Trainer at Iowa State University in the late 1970's, Jeff has made physical therapy equipment his passion since 1986. He launched Advantage Medical in 1994 with a commitment to help Physical Therapists and rehab professionals improve clinical outcomes as well as save time and costs through pioneering, creative solutions. Jeff's entrepreneurial approach keeps Advantage Medical and its clients at the forefront of innovations and best practices in the PT industry.

Jeff was also one of four original founders of the National Medical Alliance in 1988 which later changed its name to Motion1. He served as the Chief Operating Officer for 10 years and was instrumental in its growth and reputation as a leading supplier to independent rehabilitation distributors across the country. He is also the host of the long running podcast "PT Talker" featuring a physical therapy expert for listeners every week. Subscribe to the free, informative broadcast designed to help therapists grow their business at [www.PTTalker.com](http://www.PTTalker.com)

## About Advantage Medical

Advantage Medical was established in 1994 to meet the growing needs of rehab professionals in a variety of medical disciplines. Advantage Medical has become a leading provider of expert advice as well as quality therapy equipment and supplies, offering innovative solutions to challenges faced by physical therapists, clinic directors, chiropractors, athlete trainers and other medical professionals.

In October of 2010, Advantage Medical joined the family of Scrip Companies of Bolingbrook, IL as an operating division. Now with access to a wider variety of products and large scale purchasing power, Advantage Medical is poised to raise the level of value we bring to our clients. Scrip Companies serves markets in massage therapy, chiropractic, spa and now physical therapy.

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