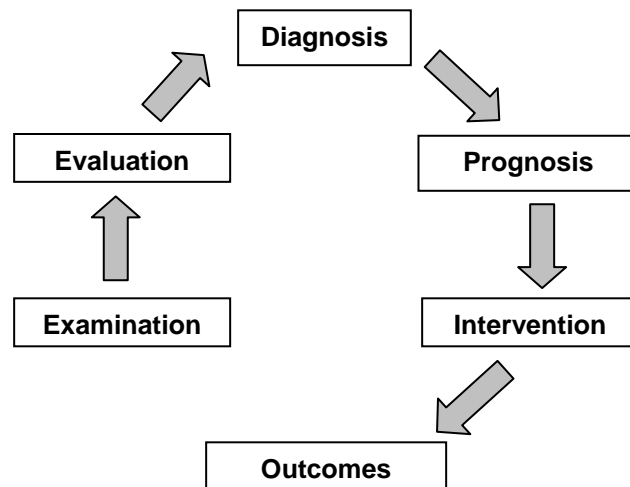# Problem Solving Algorithm Utilized by PTAs in Patient/Client Intervention

This algorithm, developed by APTA's Departments of Education, Accreditation, and Practice, is intended to reflect current policies and positions on the problem solving processes utilized by physical therapist assistants in the provision of selected interventions. The controlling assumptions are essential to understanding and applying this algorithm. (This document can be found in *A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Assistant Education: Version 2007*.)

Controlling Assumptions

- The physical therapist integrates the five elements of patient/client management – examination, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention – in a manner designed to optimize outcomes. Responsibility for completion of the examination, evaluation, diagnosis, and prognosis is borne solely by the physical therapist. The physical therapist's plan of care may involve the physical therapist assistant to assist with selected interventions. This algorithm represents the decision making of the physical therapist assistant within the intervention element.

- The physical therapist will direct and supervise the physical therapist assistant consistent with APTA House of Delegates positions, including Direction and Supervision of the Physical Therapist Assistant (HOD P06-05-18-26); APTA core documents, including Standards of Ethical Conduct for the PTA; and federal and state legal practice standards; and institutional regulations.

- All selected interventions are directed and supervised by the physical therapist. Additionally, the physical therapist remains responsible for the physical therapy services provided when the physical therapist's plan of care involves the physical therapist assistant to assist with selected interventions.

- Selected intervention(s) includes the procedural intervention, associated data collection, and communication, including written documentation associated with the safe, effective, and efficient completion of the task.

- The algorithm may represent the thought processes involved in a patient/client interaction or episode of care. Entry into the algorithm will depend on the point at which the physical therapist assistant is directed by the physical therapist to provide selected interventions.

- Communication between the physical therapist and physical therapist assistant regarding patient/client care is ongoing. The algorithm does not intend to imply a limitation or restriction on communication between the physical therapist and physical therapist assistant.

Problem Solving Algorithm Utilized by PTAs in Patient/Client Intervention
* See Controlling Assumptions*

Read physical therapy examination/ evaluation and plan of care (POC) and review with the physical therapist

Are there questions or items to be clarified about the selected interventions?

Yes → Communicate with PT for clarification

No → Collect data on patient/client current condition (eg, chart review, vitals, pain, and observation)

Compare results to previously collected data & safety parameters established by the PT

Does the data comparison indicate that the safety parameters established by the PT about the pt/ct's condition have been met?

Communicate with PT and follow as directed

No/ Uncertain

Yes → Initiate selected Intervention(s) as directed by the PT

Communicate results of pt/ct intervention(s) and data collection, including required documentation

Is pt/ct safe & comfortable with selected intervention(s)?

Yes → Collect relevant data → Compare results to previously collected data

Does the data comparison indicate that there is progress toward the expectations established by the PT about the pt/ct's response to the interventions?

Does the data comparison indicate that the expectations established by the PT about the pt/ct's response to the interventions have been met?

No/ Uncertain

Stop/interrupt intervention(s)

Continue selected intervention(s)

Yes

No/Uncertain

No

Yes/ Uncertain

Interrupt/stop intervention(s)

Communicate with PT and follow as directed

Can modifications be made to the selected intervention(s) to ensure pt/ct safety/comfort?

Yes → Make permissible modifications to intervention(s)

Yes

Can modifications be made to the selected intervention(s) to improve pt/ct response?

No/ Uncertain

Communicate with PT and follow as directed

No/ Uncertain

Communicate with PT and follow as directed

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