

A REPORT TO ESTABLISH THE NEED FOR A SCHOOL OF PHYSICAL THERAPY
IN THE STATE OF NEBRASKA

Prepared by the Committee on Education
Nebraska Chapter, AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

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In the State of Nebraska, Physical Therapists are employed by General Medical and Surgical Hospitals, State and County Hospitals, Adult and Children's Health Agencies, Children's Special Education Schools, Veteran's Administration Hospitals, Student Health and Athletic Departments of the University of Nebraska and Kearney State College, Children's Rehabilitation Centers, State Orthopedic Hospital, Private Medical Clinics, Private Orthopedic Clinics, Local School Districts, Extended Care Facilities (Nursing and Convelescent Homes), Home Health Agencies of the Medicare Program, and Offices of Private Practice.

Physical Therapists not only are employed by an institution but also extend their services to nursing homes, extended care facilities, and the homebound patient in varying degrees, according to the needs of the population as determined by the patient's private physician. These services are provided by the individual Therapists on request of the patient's private Physician accroding to the plan of treatment prescribed by and directed by the Physician. Therapists carry out these services after their normal institutional working day and on weekends. In smaller Nebraska communities some Therapists serve not only the hospital and nursing homes in their immediate community, but also serve one or more additional homes and/or hospitals in nearby communities. A Physical Therapist in North Platte travels to Ogallala, Cozad and occasionally to Lexington, while in Omaha fourteen Therapists provide services to ten Extended Care Facilities and other Homebound patients. In Lincoln eight individuals provide similar services in their community.

Starting with the introduction of Physical Therapy services in the United States and continuing to the present time there has always been a greater demand for services than the available Therapists could supply.

Since the beginning of the utilization of Physical Therapy by the United States Army Surgeon General's Office during World War I, when personnel were employed by the Medical Department for the purpose of aiding in the physical restoration of thousands of war casualties returning from the battlefields of Europe, the scope of the services of Physical Therapy has continued to broaden in direct proportion to the availability of qualified personnel to provide these services and to the degree to which the licensed Physician utilized the services made available to him and to the general public.

Other factors which have influenced the expansion of Physical Medicine include increased emphasis in medical education with reference to physical rehabilitation courses, gradual increased utilization of the services by the Armed Forces and other governmental agencies (city, county, state, federal and international) and the gradual increased awareness on the part of the citizens of this and other nations throughout the world. In addition, the establishment of a scientific basis for the use of the various physical agents through literally thousands of research projects in institutions here in the United States and abroad, has done much to influence the expansion of Physical Therapy.

In 1917 the U.S. Army employed 800 women to function as Restoration Aides, caring for and helping to rehabilitate the war injured Veterans. Today, June 1968 over 11,500 men and women are members of the American Physical Therapy Association. Figures now available from the American Hospital Association indicate the continuing upward spiral in the use of and the demand for Physical Therapy services, and although projected needs are merely educated estimates, it can be assumed with some degree of validity that 20,000 qualified persons are now needed on a national level to meet these increasing needs. This is without considering losses to the profession resulting from the normal attrition rate due to death, disablement, retirement, change in occupation, and change within the profession from the clinical facilities into research, education and administrative positions.

The growth of Physical Therapy in the State of Nebraska has been characterized by the increase in the number of communities and institutions being served by Physical Therapists, and the increased numbers of citizens of the State who have been treated by and benefited by

the utilization of the Licensed Physical Therapist, his special skills and knowledge, his time and energy, and his devotion to the responsibilities entrusted to him by the Medical profession, specifically by the patient's private Physician, who directs and supervises the treatment plan.

In June, 1952 there were only 10 Physical Therapists actively employed in the State of Nebraska. 1 was located in Lincoln, 7 were in Omaha, and 2 were employed in 2 other communities across the State. Contrast these figures with those of January 1968 when 70 Physical Therapists were serving 23 communities from Chadron to Nebraska City, from Omaha to Scottsbluff, and from Superior to Grand Island, Columbus, Norfolk and Fremont-Schuyler.

In June 1968 all of the Licensed Physical Therapists in Nebraska have been trained in other states such as New York, California, Texas, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Colorado and Pennsylvania. Most of these people are natives of Nebraska, educated in Nebraska's schools through elementary, secondary and college levels until having to go elsewhere to seek their professional training in Physical Therapy. At the University of Nebraska, College of Arts and Science, May 1968, TWENTY students in the Junior Division are being counselled by their advisor and encouraged to seek further education leading to a license in Physical Therapy. And additional TEN students in Teachers College have indicated an interest in Physical Therapy as their lifework. These numbers are reported to be consistent with the annual average experienced by the Advisor in Physical Therapy at the University in Lincoln. He also reports that currently ELEVEN Nebraska students are enrolled in Physical Therapy schools in other states: University of Colorado, 1; Baylor University, 4; University of Iowa, 2; Stanford University, 1; University of Kansas, 1; University of Missouri, 2. The latter two students having been placed there via a reciprocal agreement between the School of Engineering, University of Nebraska, and the School of Physical Therapy, University of Missouri. These figures indicate that annually at least 60% of the Nebraska students (University) hoping to enroll in Physical Therapy Schools are unable to do so.

It appears that this problem is widespread across the State. A report from Omaha University, June 1968, concerns three cases:

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Student A: Enrolled as freshman at O.U. planning to graduate in Secondary Education with Science major, then would transfer to the professional school outside Nebraska. To date he has not been able to gain admission.

Student B: Completed Baccalaureate Degree, was not accepted at Colorado due to discontinuation of their Certificate program*; student now married, husband would have to transfer to location of school offering Certificate program; will now change educational objective and enroll in Teachers College at O.U.

Student C & D: Nebraska male students recruited by O.U., enrolled at Mankato State College, Minnesota where the college had a working agreement with U. of Minnesota School of P.T. Could then pursue their objective from start to finish in Minnesota. It is also of interest to note that these men were athletes of scholarship caliber.

Chadron State College reports that 4 sophomore students are studying with Physical Therapy as their prime objective. They are currently corresponding with several professional schools in an effort to get admission into a Baccalaureate program and complete their objective without delay or alteration.

Other reports from Kearney State College, Hiram Scott College, Norfolk, Columbus, Beatrice and Hastings indicate that another 15 college students ranging from the freshman to senior level are planning a career in Physical Therapy.

It is a matter of record that some NEBRASKA students have been unable to pursue the advanced professional training in Physical Therapy due to the increased costs resulting from NON-RESIDENT FEES and additional living expenses entailed from moving out of the State for such training.

Hundreds of high school students are introduced to the career of Physical Therapy every year by the efforts of guidance counselors and the recruitment activities of the NEBRASKA CHAPTER, AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION. Reports from ten Nebraska communities reveal that 12 high school juniors and 15 seniors are currently planning to study for careers in Physical Therapy. Some of these prospective Physical Therapists stopped short, some stalled or delayed

*An authorized training program for holders of B.S. degree who have also completed prerequisites in prescribed Science fields.

and others unaffected by the knowledge that the professional training must be obtained outside the boundaries of their native state.

Currently the need for hundreds of additional Physical Therapists on the national level is well documented by surveys of the American Physical Therapy Association and the Health, Education and Welfare Department of the Federal Government. It is reported that there are 15 placement opportunities for each new graduate of an approved school, 46 schools graduate 1,000 students annually, and the annual attrition rate is 500+. In Omaha alone FIFTEEN staff positions are unoccupied and on the State level, TEN more vacancies occur. Holdrege has a new Physical Therapy Department with no staff, Oshkosh and Chappell are building new or expanding existing facilities to include Physical Therapy, not to mention the many other communities whose plans for expansion of their medical care facilities are unknown to this committee at this time.

With the advent of Medicare, two years ago, all disciplines dedicated to the care of the sick and disabled were faced with an even greater shortage of supply of trained personnel to fulfill the ever increasing demands for service to an ever increasing population of citizens in our communities at all levels from the hamlet to the metropolis. In our State, based on only 12 cities reporting, it is now estimated that by 1972, only four years hence, an additional 24 Licensed Physical Therapists will be needed, making no allowance for normal attrition since all those now practicing can look forward to at least 10 or 15 years of service under normal circumstances.

Specific details with reference to the broadening scope of Physical Therapy Services are evidenced by a comparison of the function of the Restoration Aide of 1917 with the Licensed Physical Therapist of 1968. The Restoration Aide used her background of knowledge and experience in Nursing and Health-Physical Education to help rehabilitate the war injured veterans. The physical disabilities ranged from the residual disuse atrophy of simple fractures to the quadruple amputee; and, of course, included the multiple variations in degree and severity between those extremes. At varying intervals in time and space, due to specific needs or interest of individual practitioners and patient, additional physical disabilities have been dealt with by the Physical Therapist. The quest for solutions to the problems related to pulmonary diseases, mental health, the skeletal

nervous and muscular systems as well as those of the pediatric and geriatric society has been made concurrently by Physicians, Nurses, and Physical Therapists in clinic, hospital, research and educational levels.

Some of these areas of interest have been developed or expanded to a considerable degree while other areas have only had the surface scratched; thereby, leaving the horizons wide open to further development and expansion in these and other areas perhaps not yet experienced by any man.

It becomes increasingly apparent that the direction in which investigation proceeds, directly depends on the investigators awareness that a problem exists, and his interest in searching for solutions to the problem. The rate at which the profession can institute or utilize the techniques resulting from research and investigations is again in direct proportion to the number of individuals working in the profession, and the number of those individuals who are specifically interested in working toward the solution of the problems as they effect the members of the society in which he functions, and it naturally follows that increasing numbers of that society can only be served by the profession if sufficient numbers of individuals become qualified to provide the service.

What is being done to alleviate the shortages of Qualified Physical Therapists and other health workers?

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C., has embarked on and is now actively establishing short term educational programs in an effort to fill the gap with people having some training and able to function under the direction of more knowledgeable and experienced supervisors. This will help, but only in those institutions and communities where Licensed and Qualified personnel are now functioning. This approach alone will severely restrict the expansion of services to such institutions and communities, and the many other groups of our society will continue to exist, but without these services of the modern society.

In view of the above mentioned facts and in the light of the obvious shortage of Licensed Physical Therapists in Nebraska and the United States, this committee highly recommends that a School of Physical Therapy be established in the State of Nebraska for the purpose of training Nebraska students and others when possible. The

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committee further recommends that the School of Physical Therapy be established at the very earliest possible date.

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Nebraska Chapter, American Physical Therapy Association.