

# Spotlight on Health Care



## How Physical Therapy Can Help Your Health And Wealth

(NAPSA)—No matter where you hurt—neck, shoulder, back, knee —physical therapy may improve your quality of life and save you time, trouble and money.

With physical therapy, you'll be better able to move freely without discomfort, feel renewed and may be able to avoid injury altogether.

It may also help you avoid painful, invasive and expensive surgery. Research shows that physical therapy, combined with comprehensive medical management, can be just as effective as surgery when it comes to relieving such conditions as osteoarthritis of the knee.

What's more, falls among the elderly are prevalent, dangerous, and can diminish their ability to lead an active and independent life. According to the National Council on Aging, about one in three people over 65 will fall at least once this year, perhaps with disastrous consequences. A physical therapist can design an individualized program of exercises and activities with an emphasis on strength, flexibility and proper gait.

Despite all the advantages of physical therapy, some people are not getting all they should and that their doctors have prescribed because of high co-payments. These have caused many patients to face a sad dilemma: health care vs. making ends meet.

When co-payment plans were first introduced, it was thought they'd lower medical costs by decreasing unnecessary care. Empirical evidence, however, shows that high co-payments can actually increase health care costs.

According to research published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, high co-payments led to patients skipping ambulatory care. This increased health care costs because the patients



**Because physical therapists receive specialized education in physics, anatomy and other sciences, they understand how the body works and how to manage its major systems.**

then needed more acute care, such as at a hospital, later on. The study concluded that "raising cost sharing for ambulatory care may have adverse health consequences and may increase total spending on health care."

"When you have patients, who are in pain and recovering from injuries, avoiding medically necessary care because they can't afford the high co-payments, you know there is a problem," said Matthew R. Hyland, PT, Ph.D., MPA, CSCS, President of the New York Physical Therapy Association.

High co-payments, it appears, add to health care expense and make it hard for patients to get the treatment they need to stay healthy. Many Americans are going to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) to ask their legislators what can be done.

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