



Medical Care on Your Terms: Concierge Physical Therapy

“I am a physical therapist. And I work for my patients, NOT for the insurance companies.”

What does that statement mean? Let’s start with defining physical therapy. It’s often difficult for the general public to describe the role of a physical therapist (PT). Physical therapy **is not** massage. It **is not** personal training. It **is not** being a companion. Physical therapy is an allied health profession concerned with helping individuals with pain and movement dysfunction by providing hands-on treatment, exercise, and education to help patients decrease pain and restore optimal movement and physical function. Physical therapists are highly trained professionals who have earned the title Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) through an arduous 3-year post-graduate education with multiple clinical rotations and culminating with the passing of a national licensure exam. PTs can be found in clinics, hospitals, nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, schools, fitness centers, people’s homes, and workplaces. PTs treat the entire musculoskeletal system - neck pain, back pain, any other joint, ligament, tendon, or muscle pain. They accomplish this by doing a full evaluation of the entire person, including medical and medication history, social history, strength and movement testing, and other special tests as appropriate. A PT’s job is to be a detective and discover the source of your problem, and then work with you to fix it. If a PT determines



that your condition is outside the scope of practice, they are trained in how to identify that and refer you to the most appropriate medical professional. And in the states of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, you do not need a referral from your medical doctor to seek the services of a PT (though there may be exceptions to that, such as if the therapist has been practicing less than one year, or certain insurance requirements).

While the term physical therapy is at least vaguely familiar to most, the term **“conciierge medicine”** is relatively new and less familiar. Started in recent years among MDs, the goal of [conciierge medicine](#) is to allow MDs to care for their patients without the limitations and expenses imposed by insurance companies. The goal is to create a [superior experience for both the patient and the practitioner](#). The patient can expect: decreased wait times for appointments, increased face-to-face time with doctors, improved relationships with PCPs, and less fragmentation of care. Practitioners can expect: more time with patients, less time doing paperwork, improved relationships with patients, improved patient outcomes, and decreased burn-out. [Conciierge MD options](#) are available in almost all states.

[Physical therapists](#) are also starting to adopt the conciierge model of care. Similar to PCPs, PTs have been burdened by high caseloads, increasing administrative burden as insurance regulations change, and decreased time to spend with patients. These conditions lead to many PTs feeling burnt out and many patients feeling dissatisfied by sub-optimal care with unsatisfactory outcomes. These issues can be alleviated by a conciierge practice because these



PTs can spend as much time as necessary with patients, helping to ensure that the patients are fully educated on their condition and its management.

Patients can have as many or as few appointments as appropriate without limitations imposed by insurance plans. Additionally, some concierge practices also offer mobile PT - meaning that the therapist comes to you in your home, office, gym -- wherever! This added convenience is especially attractive amid fears of Covid exposure. Sounds great, right? Now, how to go about finding such a PT?

Unfortunately, locating concierge PTs is not as easy as locating concierge MDs. There is no central resource of concierge/mobile therapists. An internet search of the terms “concierge therapy” or “mobile therapy” will yield some individual practices, but those practices may not be local and/or it can be difficult for patients to identify which practices truly meet their needs. For readers located in Rhode Island and southeast Massachusetts, Evolve Physical Therapy (www.evolveptri.com) is a local option. If you’re located outside of this area, Evolve Physical Therapy is engaged with on-line networks of other like-minded practitioners and can help find an appropriate practitioner near you.

So, if you like the idea of medical providers working for you, and not for the insurance companies, be on the look-out for more concierge providers. It’s about time for patients to receive true “**care**” from their health care providers.



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