

Eli's Rehab Report

NEWS BRIEFS :Direct Access Advocacy Climbs to Federal Level

If your state has a direct access law, Congress is working to let you apply that to your Medicare patients. The U.S. Senate recently introduced legislation that would remove the need for a physician's referral or certification of the plan of care in states where direct access is authorized, according to a May 6 press release from the American Physical Therapy Association.

Under the Medicare Patient Access to Physical Therapists Act (S. 950), introduced by Senators **Blanche Lincoln** (D-Ark.), **Lindsey Graham** (R-S.C.), and **Arlen Specter** (DPa.), Medicare Part B beneficiaries who need outpatient physical therapy would have direct access to physical therapist services as permitted by state law.

Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia have eliminated the physician referral/certification of plan requirement for patients to access physical therapists for an evaluation, while 44 states and DC allow access to some form of physical therapy treatment without referral. This legislation would defer to the state law on access regarding physical therapy, APTA clarified.

The House introduced its version of the Senate bill on March 31.