

Eli's Rehab Report

NEWS BRIEFS: POPTS Try to Squeeze Back Into South Carolina

The topic of physician ownership of physical therapy services (POPTS) is raising heat in South Carolina -- again. The South Carolina Orthopedic Association and the South Carolina Medical Association are trying to legalize referral for profit, more commonly known as POPTS -- a business setup that the South Carolina Supreme Court deemed illegal in 2006.

More specifically, in South Carolina, a physical therapist cannot be employed by a physician who gets referrals from that physician. The associations in favor of POPTS have supported new legislation, Senate Bill 1031 and House bill 4329, that would repeal the current SC Anti-POPTS law, according to News Now.

Background: South Carolina's state licensing act prohibits therapists from working for physicians who refer patients to them for therapy services. In March of 2004, the state attorney general issued an opinion supporting this prohibition, and in May of 2005, the South Carolina Board of PT Examiners got the go-ahead to take disciplinary action against PTs and PTAs employed by physicians. Then, in late 2006, the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled in favor of the "SC Anti-POPTS Law," sealing the deal. Those who support the anti-POPTS law say it is in place to ensure that physicians make health care decisions and referrals to physical therapists in the patient's best interest and not for personal financial gain.

But this isn't the first time groups have sought to overturn anti-POPTS legislation, and South Carolina chapter members of APTA are expecting a "tough fight" over the issue, according to News Now.