

## Eli's Rehab Report

### News Briefs: Professional Standards: VA Gets Scrutinized for Outdated Physical Therapist Standards

#### More PTs are needed to serve aging and injured veterans, APTA says

Veterans receiving physical therapy from U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)-employed physical therapists are due for an upgrade.

Current VA standards haven't been updated in nearly 25 years and are preventing many physical therapists with higher education from joining the VA, according to an American Physical Therapy Association press release.

The details: The VA does not recognize the doctor of physical therapy (DPT) degree, though about 80 percent of physical therapist education programs offer doctorate credentials, APTA said. Furthermore, VA guidelines only require PTs to hold a bachelor's degree, in spite of professional accreditation standards requiring a minimum of a master's degree to practice.

These inconsistencies leave qualified PTs little incentive to practice in the VA system, which will need more healthcare professionals. According to the VA, 38 percent of the veteran population -- about 9.2 million veterans -- are age 65 or older. This proportion is expected to rise to 45 percent by 2033.

Chief of Minneapolis VA Medical Center's physical therapy department **Jeffrey Newman, PT**, proposed the VA:

- Recognize PTs' educational and clinical training;
- Recognize the doctoral degree in physical therapy;
- Clarify a VA career ladder for PTs; and
- Expand opportunities for career advancement for PTs.