

Eli's Rehab Report

News Briefs: Therapists See Progress With Loan-Repayment Bill

You may have heard talk of a federal student loan- repayment program for professions of "national need." It's still a law in the making, but lucky for PTs, OTs and audiologists, the U.S. House of Representatives included these professions in its version of the bill, reports AOTA, APTA and ASHA. (Speech-language pathologists had already been included in the bill, ASHA confirms with Eli.)

Details: On Feb. 7 an amendment authorizing the U.S. secretary of education to forgive a portion of qualifying student loan debt to PTs, OTs and audiologists was added to the House's College Opportunity and Affordability Act, H.R. 4137, which reauthorizes the Higher Education Act.

Watch for: The Senate passed its version, S. 1642, in July 2007, but it differs considerably from H.R. 4137. That means the House and Senate will have to iron out their differences in conference, AOTA said in a press release.

As far as the House version, the loan repayment program allows for up to \$2,000 per year for five years in repayment if professionals work in particular areas. For therapists, the bill cites working with "children, adolescents, or veterans" as eligible to apply for student loan forgiveness, APTA says. PLUS Loans borrowed on behalf of a dependent student are exempt.

Note: The current extension of the Higher Education Act expires March 31.