

September 2019

# HEALTHCARE HIGHLIGHTS

The Rural AHEC Student Newsletter



WESTERN NEW YORK

**WNY R-AHEC**

RURAL AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER



September's Healthcare Career Focus:

## Physical Therapist (& Assistant)

A physical therapist is a highly educated healthcare professional who helps people recover from injuries or conditions that impede their strength, mobility, or physical abilities. A physical therapist (or assistant) teaches patients how to gain strength or lessen chronic pain using techniques specific to each patient.

### What might I do as a Physical Therapist or as a Physical Therapy Assistant?

Assess patient strength, pain level, balance, range of motion and other indicators of overall functional mobility

Diagnose and develop individualized treatment plan (PT) and implement plan as directed (PTA)

Utilize heat, ice, ultrasound, electrical stimulation, hands-on therapy, and a variety of equipment to help patients reach goals

Work collaboratively with patient, family members, and healthcare team

Work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, outpatient clinics, schools, sports/fitness facilities, nursing homes, or private practices

Keep current in the field to identify new technologies and techniques that may improve patient health (PT)

Work closely with patients to ensure that they are educated in the use of any assistive devices or exercises they are to engage in at home (PTA)



### How do I become a Physical Therapist?

- Complete a minimum of 60 hours of qualified undergraduate study—4 years
- Graduate from an accredited Doctor of Physical Therapy Program—3 years
- Complete clinical experience as part of degree
- Pass state licensure exam

**Average Salary:**  
\$83,999

**OR**

Opt to train as an assistant:  
2 years higher education

**Average Salary:**  
\$45,000

## **What is it really like to be a Physical Therapist?**

It is a hands-on profession in which you work closely with patients, evaluating functional mobility, devising treatment plans, and implementing strategies to help meet individual goals. Assistants work much more consistently with patients than do therapists. Many therapists begin their physical therapy career as an assistant.

Physical therapists tend to have high job satisfaction. According to CNN-Money.com physical therapists receive an A grade in Personal Satisfaction and Benefit to Society categories. ([apta.org/ptcareers/overview/](http://apta.org/ptcareers/overview/))

**Video: Why I Chose a Career in Physical Therapy** ([apta.org/ProspectiveStudents/WhyIChosePT/](http://apta.org/ProspectiveStudents/WhyIChosePT/))

**Video: You Can Be Me: A Career in Physical Therapy** ([apta.org/YouCanBeMe/](http://apta.org/YouCanBeMe/))

**Video: Becoming a Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA)** ([apta.org/PTACareers/](http://apta.org/PTACareers/))



***“Often, our most valuable tools as physical therapists are simply empathy and patient education.”*** Paul Caudillo, PT, DPT

***“I love coming to work every day—meeting new people, facing new challenges, and helping patients tap their inner reserves to overcome setbacks and achieve personal goals.”***

Heather Birely, PT, DPT

***“We must always remember that no two individuals are the same, that no two rehabilitations are identical, and that a little bit of empathy can make all the difference.”*** Karen Thatcher, PT, DPT

### **Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center**

20 Duncan Street, Warsaw, New York 14569

585-786-6275

[lgreen@r-ahec.org](mailto:lgreen@r-ahec.org)

[www.r-ahec.org](http://www.r-ahec.org)

*Please contact us if you have questions about healthcare career opportunities or educational pathways to healthcare careers!*

Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center (R-AHEC) is one of nine centers in the New York State Area Health Education Center (NYSAHEC) organization. Our mission is to improve health and healthcare through education.

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