

PRESS RELEASE

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Physical Therapists Boost Falls Prevention Programs as our Nation Quickly Ages

Chester Springs, PA – April 15, 2016 – This year, one-third of all Americans 65 years old and older will experience a fall. Some will quickly brush off the dirt and go about their day, but others won't be so lucky. The physical therapy profession has long been involved in fall-prevention efforts, guiding our seniors to ambulate safely, maintain mobility longer, and be more independent.

Falls rank among the top burdens on our healthcare system—with \$34 billion shelled out for fall-related injuries in 2013 alone—and threaten the health of our nation. Falls land a member of our nation's elderly population in the emergency department every 13 seconds, and every 20 minutes an older adult dies from fall-related trauma, reports a survey conducted by Carnegie Mellon University's College of Engineering.

Moderate to severe injuries incurred during a fall can lead to further health declines and loss of independence among our seniors. A team approach with a solid foundation of communication is crucial to adequately prepare for the steady stream of baby boomers crossing the 65-year-old threshold. As part of a medical team, PTs are trained to identify each patient's risk factors, provide education and preventive strategies, and address impairments. The biggest risk factors for a fall include balance/strength impairments, medication interactions, safety issues in the home and community, and visual impairments.

A new study published in *The Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* in February 2016 titled "Exercise and Fall Prevention: Narrowing the Research-to-Practice Gap and Enhancing Integration of Clinical and Community Practice," reinforces the premise that falls are preventable with risk assessment and exercises that incorporate elements of balance, gait, and strength training. In fact, the study says, exercise has been shown to reduce the incidence of falls by up to 40%.

This could be music to the ears of U.S. adults who expressed concern in the Carnegie Mellon survey about an older parent falling, 54% of 1,900 participants to be exact. A PT exercise program to prevent falls among the elderly includes core strengthening, lower extremity resistance exercises and balance training.

The Journal of the American Geriatrics Society study also reveals some of the evidence-to-practice challenges in addressing this global public health crisis. Falls and their associated healthcare costs can be reduced by better integrating research on exercise intervention into clinical practice and community programs, the study says.

As healthcare increasingly embraces prevention and wellness strategies, strong communication between physicians, physical therapists and other key stakeholders will help to capture our elders most at risk for falls. Education, risk assessment, evidence-based falls prevention classes in the community and skilled physical therapy interventions are the basis for a solid plan of attack.

About The Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association

Founded in 1956, the Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association champions the success of physical therapist-owned businesses. Our members are leaders and innovators in the health care system. The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) represents more than 85,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and students of physical therapy nationwide. For more information, please visit www.ppsapta.org.

About Kinetic Physical Therapy

Kinetic Physical Therapy is changing the way movement rehabilitation is managed in our community. We take an industry leading, innovative and evidence-based approach to the care of our patients. We strive to be the first call you make for all of your health and wellness needs. From your first encounter, our team will create an environment that is conducive to healing, energetic, and fun. With our highly skilled professionals and vast product line, we will get you moving toward accomplishing your goals.