

Rural Area and Workforce Concerns with the PTA Differential

Rural area concerns

The PTA differential will have an outsized impact on rural and underserved areas throughout the country. Research has consistently shown that delays in access to physical therapy care have increased overall health care costs, increased the likelihood of unnecessary testing, surgery, and use of opioids, and worse overall patient outcomes. In addition, due to labor shortages and recruitment challenges to get practicing PTs to serve rural and underserved areas, they are often heavily staffed with PTAs that live in these communities. As a result, there is a high likelihood that these clinics will have to change staffing patterns with reduced hours to survive. Ultimately, this will lead to delays in delivery of care, reduction in services provided, or the closure of some small rural clinics that serve local communities.

PTA profession and student loans

In the post-Covid environment, the physical therapy profession has significantly changed the available workforce. As a result, the profession has had difficulty filling many vacant positions. In response to the PTA differential policy, workforce changes will result in the reduced use of PTAs for patient care. This workforce reduction will negatively affect those licensed as PTAs, especially the newer graduates working to pay off student loans.