Power Your Practice With APTA Specialist Certification
In this presentation, we’ll:

1. Discuss the role of specialist certification in advancing your clinical practice and our profession.
2. Describe the current areas of specialty practice.
3. Provide an overview and describe the process for APTA Specialist Certification and Maintenance of Specialist Certification.
4. Describe the minimum eligibility requirements and the role of clinical residencies.
5. Identify top motivations to pursue specialist certification.
Dimensions of Clinical Excellence

- Knowledge
  - Multidimensional
  - Patient-centered

- Virtues
  - Caring
  - Commitment

- Movement
  - Central focus
  - Centered on function

- Clinical reasoning
  - Collaborative process
  - Reflection

Pathways to Clinical Excellence

- Entry-level degree.
- Years of experience.
- Continuing education.
- Postprofessional residency.
- Postprofessional degrees.
- Postprofessional certifications.
- **Specialization – board certification!**
What Is Clinical Specialization?

A formal process established to:

- Recognize physical therapists with **advanced** clinical knowledge, experience, and skills in a special area of practice.

- Help consumers and the health care community identify physical therapists who are specialists.

- Address a specific area of patient need.
Key Elements of Board Certification

**Voluntary**
You decide

**Unrestrictive**
Does not prohibit others

**Coordinated**
All areas of specialization managed by a central mechanism: ABPTS
What Does Clinical Specialization Require?

- Broad-based foundation of physical therapist education and clinical practice.
- Depth and breadth of knowledge in a specialty area.
- Advanced clinical expertise and skills.
Purpose of Board Certification

• Recognize specialists through established testing methods to ensure a defensible process, and a reliable and valid examination.

• Promote the highest possible level of physical therapist care, and ongoing development of the science and art underlying each specialty practice.

• Inform stakeholders of physical therapists who are certified in a specialty area.
Areas of Physical Therapist Practice Recognized Through APTA Specialist Certification

1. Cardiovascular and Pulmonary
2. Clinical Electrophysiology
3. Geriatrics
4. Neurology
5. Oncology
6. Orthopaedics
7. Pediatrics
8. Sports
9. Women’s Health
10. Wound Management
Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Specialist Certification

- **Current permanent/unrestricted license** to practice physical therapy in the United States, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, or Virgin Islands.

- **2,000 hours** minimum of **direct patient care**:
  - As a licensed physical therapist **in the specialty area**.
  - 25% (500 hours) of which must have occurred in the last three years.
Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Specialist Certification

Direct patient care must include activities:

- In each element of the patient and client management model, as defined in APTA’s “Guide to Physical Therapist Practice.”

- Included in the “Description of Specialty Practice.”
Other Eligibility Requirements

Specific to the specialty:

- Cardiovascular and Pulmonary: ACLS certification; data analysis project or case study.
- Clinical Electrophysiologic: Patient reports.
- Sports: Acute management of injury and illness certification.
- Oncology, Women’s Health, and Wound Management: Case study.
Residency Option for Meeting the Eligibility Requirements for Specialist Certification

Complete an **APTA-Accredited Clinical Residency**:

- All specialty councils allow completion of an APTA-accredited **clinical residency** to replace all or a portion of the practice eligibility requirements.

- Programs are postprofessional clinical and didactic education designed to advance the physical therapist’s skill in a defined practice area.

- Residency curriculum is designed using the “Description of Specialty Practice.”
Board Examination

• Developed by the specialty councils in collaboration with the National Board of Medical Examiners.

• A rigorous, criterion-referenced exam that tests the application and synthesis of
  • Advanced knowledge.
  • Clinical skills and reasoning.
Where To Start

- Description of Specialty Practice:
  - Self-assess your strengths and weaknesses.
  - Consider patient populations that are familiar and not as familiar.

- Develop a plan and strategy to prepare.
  - Your patients are your best teachers!
Description of Specialty Practice

• Describes the advanced knowledge, skills, and abilities for clinical practice in a specialty area.

• Is based on the results of an extensive practice analysis conducted by specialty councils and approved by ABPTS.

• Guides the development of the certification exam.
Components of the Examination*

- Patient Care.
- Teaching.
- Administration.
- Consultation.
- Communication.
- Interpretation of research.

*As defined by a specific DSP.
Path to Clinical Specialization

Clinical experience in specialty area → Seeking mentors → Professional development

- Board certified specialists
- Knowledge and skills
- Continuing education
- Postprofessional clinical residency
- Postprofessional education
Preparing for the Board Certification Examination

1. Continuously review and adapt your “path.”
2. Use resources from APTA academies:*
   - Recommended textbooks.
   - Reading lists.
   - Advanced clinical practice courses.
3. Join a study group.
4. Seek the guidance of a mentor.
5. Attend continuing education.

*ABPTS does not approve or review material or course content.
Specialist Certification Application Process

Online Application
At abpts.org

Deadlines for exams
July 1: Cardiovascular and Pulmonary, Clinical Electrophysiology, Oncology, Women’s Health, and Wound Management
July 31: All other specialties

All applications are reviewed
By APTA Certifications Staff
# Specialist Certification Fees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>APTA Member</th>
<th>Nonmember</th>
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<tr>
<td>Application Review</td>
<td>$525</td>
<td>$870</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examination</td>
<td>$810</td>
<td>$1,535</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$2,405</strong></td>
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Board certification is valid for 10 years.
Possible Sources of Financial Assistance

• Continuing education funds through your employer.
• Scholarships, such as the Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy’s Carol Gildenberg Dichter Memorial Fund Scholarship.
When the Certification Exam Is Administered

• Once per year, over a two-week exam period.

• 2022 candidates may sit for the exam between **February 26 and March 12.**
Examination Format

• Computerized exams, administered at Prometric test centers worldwide (prometric.com).

• Multiple choice questions including case scenarios, videos, and pictures.
Recognition of Certified Clinical Specialists

- Opening ceremony of APTA Combined Sections Meeting.
- APTA academies and state chapters.
- Inclusion in online directory of board-certified clinical specialists.
- Only individuals who have successfully completed the ABPTS certification process may use the term “Board-Certified Clinical Specialist.”
Maintenance of Specialists Certification: Purpose and Model

• MOSC more effectively verifies current competence as an advanced practitioner in the specialty area.

• More effectively evaluates professional development and clinical experience.

• Better encourages ongoing education and professional growth.

• Keeps pace with the rapidly expanding specialty knowledge base and scientific evidence that guides clinical decision-making.

• Promotes improved health outcomes related to physical therapist specialty services.
Maintenance of Specialist Certification

Certification Cycle

Year
3
6
9
10

Life-long learning and professional development

Cognitive expertise

MOSC

Licensure and professional standing

Practice performance and clinical care and reasoning
Minimum Eligibility Requirements of MOSC

• **Evidence of current licensure** as a physical therapist in the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

• **Direct patient care in the specialty area:**
  
  • Evidence of 200 hours of direct patient care in the specialty practice within each three-year submission period.
  
  • For sports specialists only, 33 of 200 hours in venue coverage.
  
  • Hours accrued in year 10 applied to the next three-year submission period.

• **Sports specialization requires courses in CPR and Acute Management of Injury and Illness.**
Minimum Eligibility Requirements of MOSC

Commitment to Life-Long Learning Through Professional Development

• Mimics the information captured in the current PDP (professional services, continuing education coursework, publications, presentations, clinical supervision and consultation, research, clinical instruction, teaching).

• Minimum requirements for each three-year submission period across three designated activity areas.

• Minimum of 10 MOSC credits, within two of three designated activity categories, in years 3, 6, and 9. By year 9, accrual of at least 30 MOSC credits, and demonstrated professional development in each of the three designated activity categories.

• Credits accrued in year 10 applied to the next three-year submission period.

• A web-based submission/tracking system.

• Completion of an accredited residency or fellowship program meets all requirements for one MOSC cycle.
Minimum Eligibility Requirements of MOSC

Practice performance through examples of clinical care and clinical reasoning:

• Online submission of one reflective portfolio for each three-year submission period.
• Demonstration of the clinical care and reasoning used and reflection on how a patient case(s) has impacted practice.
• Not scored, but screened for completion of required information and reflection.
Minimum Eligibility Requirements of MOSC

Cognitive Expertise Through a Test of Knowledge in the Profession:

- Non-proctored, open-resource recertification examination.
- Comprises approximately 100 items in year 10.
- Exam blueprint mirrors initial certification exam but reflects contemporary specialist practice and allows for demonstration of continued competency in general areas of the profession (professional roles, responsibilities, values).
- Requires successful completion of requirements 1-3 at each three-year submission period.
- Two attempts are permitted without loss of credential.
MOSC Examination

Review Cycle 3 applications

Cycle 3 Review
July 1-Aug. 31

Review Cycle 4 applications

Cycle 4 Review
July 1-Sept. 30

First 25 Questions
November-December

25 Questions
January-February

25 Questions
March-April

25 Questions
May-June
Who Are Board-Certified Clinical Specialists?
Number of Newly Certified Specialists
## Total Numbers of Certified Specialists by Specialty Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular and Pulmonary (first exam 1985)</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Electrophysiologic (first exam 1986)</td>
<td>155</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geriatrics (first exam 1992)</td>
<td>2,760</td>
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<td>Neurology (first exam 1987)</td>
<td>3,096</td>
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<td>Oncology (first exam 2019)</td>
<td>107</td>
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<td>Orthopaedics (first exam 1989)</td>
<td>15,162</td>
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<td>Pediatrics (first exam 1986)</td>
<td>1,792</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports (first exam 1987)</td>
<td>2,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Health (first exam 2009)</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Certified Clinical Specialists: Age

Data current as of June 2020

- 50 and over
- Age 40-49
- Age 30-39
- Under 30

Data current as of June 2020
Certified Clinical Specialists: Gender

Data current as of June 2020

- Female: 56%
- Male: 44%
Certified Clinical Specialists: Work Settings

1. Private PT offices.
2. Health systems or hospital-based outpatient facility or clinics.
3. Academic institutions.
Certified Clinical Specialists: Positions Held

1. Supervisor/director of PT.
2. Staff or senior PT.
3. Sole owner/partner physical therapy practice.
4. Academic faculty.
Why Do Physical Therapists Become Board-Certified Clinical Specialists?
Perspective on ABPTS Specialization

Initial Certification = Starting Point

Mindset + Commitment = Continued practice as a certified specialist

To stay current and advanced in PT practice

To be a lifelong learner
Top Motivations To Pursue ABPTS Certification

• Professional career goal.
• Personal challenge or achievement.
• Earn a credential that reflects advanced practice to patients, physicians, and payers.
• Proof of expertise in specialty area.

Positive Impact of Board Certification

• Sense of personal achievement.
• Self-confidence and professional growth.
• Patient care, including better outcomes.
• Increased credibility with patients and referral sources.
• Recognition in clinical, academic and community settings.

How Board-Certification Has Influenced Specialists’ Careers

Opened doors for professional growth:

- Consultations.
- Invited presentations.
- New job opportunities.
- Leadership and service.
- Teaching opportunities.
- Research collaboration.
- Networking.
Service Opportunities Related to Specialization

ABPTS
- Oversees all specialties

Specialty Councils
- Oversees exam development process, MOSC, practice analysis

SME
- Conducts exam standard setting and specialty practice analysis

CCE
- Edits exam items
- Mentors SACE

SACE
- Writes exam items
Employer Support of ABPTS Certification

• 53% pay at least some of the costs associated with obtaining clinical specialization.

• 43% give priority in hiring to job applicants who are board certified.

• Employers value the expertise of specialists:
  • High patient care standards.
  • Mentors for others.
  • Team leadership.
Value of ABPTS Certification to Certified Specialists

- 79% report that certification is an indicator of **clinical competence**.
- 90% report that certification is an indicator of **depth and breadth of knowledge in an area of specialty practice**.
- High rate (65%) of specialists choose to recertify.

For more information contact:

APTA
Certifications Department
3030 Potomac Ave., Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22305-3085
800-999-2782, ext 8520

abpts.org
spec-cert@apta.org
Questions