



News From APTA



American  
Physical Therapy  
Association

## MPA Summer 2009 *Shorelines*

---

*Move Forward.*<sup>TM</sup>  
*Physical Therapy Brings Motion to Life*

### **Branding Physical Therapists: Join the Campaign**

**A comprehensive campaign aims to change how the public views the physical therapy profession.**

By now you've probably heard about APTA's initiative to brand the physical therapist. Perhaps you attended APTA's official roll out of the brand at the Combined Sections Meeting in Las Vegas, or read about it on APTA's Moving Forward blog. If not then here's a quick run down of how the campaign started, where it is now, and where it's going. In 2007, APTA hired CRT/tanaka, an award-winning national public relations firm, to draft guidelines for a brand campaign aimed at better and more accurately defining physical therapists to various audiences. In October of that same year, CRT/tanaka commissioned a telephone survey of 400 scientifically-selected heads of household nationwide.

The survey found that:

- Nearly 90% had a positive impression of PTs,
- 80% were likely to consider using a physical therapist (PT) in the future,
- 68% of respondents who hadn't used physical therapy in the past were likely to consider using it in the future,
- 84% of physical therapy users would refer a friend or family member to their PT, and
- 88% of physical therapy users said their care was very or somewhat beneficial.

These are positive percentages of positive impressions, indeed. However, it also was determined that the respondents primarily thought of PTs in terms of rehabilitation. Thus, a primary aim of the branding campaign is to expand the public's perception of physical therapy from predominantly "rehabilitation" to "motion." No matter which specialty or setting a PT practices in — women's health, geriatrics, wellness, private practice, or hospital, etc — motion is necessary for life. Appropriately, ***Move Forward***, followed by the descriptor ***Physical Therapy Brings Motion to Life***, has been chosen to help describe what physical therapy and physical therapists are all about.

Consumers surveyed said they'd be more likely to see a PT if physical therapy would improve/restore their mobility, provide a cost effective alternative to surgery, and help them avoid the side effects of prescription medication. With that in mind, the core message of the campaign was developed: *Physical therapists can help your mobility and quality of life without surgery or prescription medication.*

The campaign also focuses on brand personality — that is, how PTs are seen in the eyes of consumers. Two particular personalities have been identified and merged — providing a unique professional personality for PTs. The first personality, The Sage, helps people act smarter and feel more confident, is known as a coach/teacher, delivers knowledge, offers independence, focuses on understanding, and is an expert/advisor. The second personality The Hero, helps people perform at their upper limits, is known as a rescuer/warrior, delivers courage, offers mastery, focuses on proving, and is a motivator. The physical therapist as a Sage Hero merges the independence gained from a teacher/coach with the strength and mastery offered by the hero, and lifts up the role of the physical therapist in the eyes of consumers.

Also based on the research, requirements to "living the brand" were identified. APTA chose three to concentrate on at this time:

- Flawless and thorough documentation.
- Introductions with full name and title. ("Hello, I'm Jim Smith, doctor of physical therapy" or "Hello, I'm Emily Jones, physical therapist assistant.")
- Maintaining a professional personal appearance. (Appropriate professional attire for physical therapists. Professional work casual outfit for physical therapist assistants. Name tag with name, professional designations, and title.)

So that's the history. Where is the campaign today?

APTA has begun educating members through its "brand champions" — PTs who are leaders and advocates of the brand. Their job is to first spread the word among APTA members, and, later this year, take the message on the road to referral sources. You can find our Brand Champions on the BrandBeat Web site.

While Direct Access is our ultimate goal, we recognize that we must work within the current environment where physicians and nurse practitioners serve as excellent referral sources of patients who at the moment, may not go directly to a physical therapist. To that end, part of the efforts to engage and educate referral sources such as physicians and nurse practitioners will include a "For Health Care Professionals" section on the brand initiative's consumer Web site ([www.moveforwardPT.com](http://www.moveforwardPT.com)), a "Marketing to Health Care Professionals Tool Kit" available at the APTA members-only BrandBeat site, and speaking engagements by brand-savvy PTs at appropriate conferences and meetings of physicians and nurse practitioners. In 2010, the brand campaign goes public — targeting consumers.

For now, APTA members are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the brand by using the resources provided by APTA and its components. The call to "Live the Brand" is coming soon!

For more information, go to [www.apta.org/brandbeat](http://www.apta.org/brandbeat).

**[www.apta.org/brandbeat](http://www.apta.org/brandbeat)**

[Last updated: 02/06/09 | Contact: [public-relations@apta.org](mailto:public-relations@apta.org)]