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CSP - Working in the USA

An overview of information gathered by us



THE CHARTERED SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY
CSP - Working in the USA

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CSP Working in the USA

An overview of information gathered by us

1. INTRODUCTION

The following is all the information we currently have on Physiotherapy in the above named country. In addition, we have listed useful contact addresses, references of articles that you may find interesting and any other information we feel you should know.

We have also included a list of CSP members resident in the country (if there are any). These people have volunteered to be a point of contact and help so feel free to get in touch with them if you have any questions. They have not volunteered to help you with anything other than advice that they give free and in their own time. So please do not overload them with questions and expectations or ask them to assist you in finding work or solving any other problems you encounter. If you intend to call them, please be sensitive to time differences. A midnight caller won't get as much help as hoped!

We have attached a feedback form to this Information Sheet. It saves the CSP time and money - and assists other members - if you report back to us any inaccuracies you encounter. Useful additions are also welcomed. You would also be of help if you could add your name to our "Willing to be contacted" list. Don't think your inexperience of the country will be a handicap. The fact that you have recently addressed the issues of going to work there often makes your experience more relevant.

It is not our intention to supply you with general information about the country - such as climate, geography, culture, inoculations required etc. (except when it refers directly to the role of the Physiotherapist) We suggest you obtain the relevant guides for this information.



2. THE NATIONAL PHYSIOTHERAPY PROFESSIONAL BODY¹

This is the equivalent of the CSP.

American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)

1111 North Fairfax Street

Alexandria

Virginia 22314- 1488

USA

Tel: (1) 703 684 APTA (2782) ex 3143 or (1) 800 999 APTA

TDD: (1) 703/683-6748

Fax: (1) 703 684 7343

Web page: <http://www.apta.org>

Contact: Ms J Meadows, Director of International Affairs

WCPT Member? Yes (Since 1951).

3. WORKING AS A PHYSIOTHERAPIST IN THE USA

PLEASE NOTE: The situation in the USA is ever changing and quite complicated. There are no longer any UK based recruiting companies to help you with the process of obtaining a licence to practice in the USA as the market for ex-patriot workers has contracted greatly. This is because the shortage of US trained physical therapists is being reversed. If you are simply thinking about working abroad for a change, then there are other countries that would provide easier access.

4. WHY WORK IN THE UNITED STATES?

There are many reasons – for example financial, cultural or professional. You'll experience a rich diversity of environments and cultures during your visit. And professionally you'll have the chance to learn new skills that will be valuable to you in your future career. You'll discover that America has a great deal to offer you in terms of lifestyle and leisure.

5. LICENSURE AS A PHYSICAL THERAPIST IN THE UNITED STATES

The US is a federal republic, and each state has its own subset of laws that govern a wide range of issues - including licensure as a physical therapist. 'Licensure' is the equivalent of 'registration' in the UK and is a legal requirement for practice.

The qualifications required to obtain licensure vary from state to state, and becoming licensed to work in one state does not automatically entitle you to



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licensure in another. This is an overview of what these requirements are, and how they are likely to affect physiotherapists trained outside the United States. The policies described are determined by the licensing agencies in the United States. These are the equivalent of the Health professional Council (HPC) in the UK

The APTA website contains a section on US licensure requirements:

http://www.apta.org/Advocacy/internationalaffairs/info_for_intl_edu_pt.

Responsibility for licensure lies with the credentialing agencies and not with the professional body. The Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapists (FCCPT) is recognised by the APTA as a credentialing organisation: its website is <http://www.fccpt.org>.

6. THE "EQUIVALENCY" REQUIREMENT

Almost all states require you to show that you have the equivalent of a 4-year US-awarded BSc Degree in Physical Therapy. It is very difficult to satisfy this requirement if your physiotherapy qualification does not have the status of a BSc Degree - for example the Graduate Diploma awarded by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy in the UK.

Assuming that you do have a Degree rather than a Diploma, your overall course of study still has to be equivalent in length to the minimum four years that an American BSc-holder completes at university. If the typical BSc course you followed is only three years in duration as it is in England, it may be possible to make up the 'missing year' from other secondary level qualifications which are considered to be US university level studies (e.g. A Levels). It is not possible to be more specific without an examination of your particular circumstances, in the light of current evaluation policies. (Also see page 6)

If you are a Diploma-holder, it is very unlikely that you would be considered eligible to sit the licensure examination and you would be advised to look for opportunities elsewhere. It is important to note that there will always be some states in which you will not be able to work for the reasons outlined below. If you are a Diploma-holder, and have to go to the States for personal reasons such as accompanying a partner, then you could improve your long-term prospects by upgrading your qualification to the status of a degree but the additional 'A' levels mentioned above would still be required.

7. THE EVALUATION PROCESS

In the USA qualification and registration are not co-terminous as they are in the UK. There is a three-stage evaluation process to be followed:



- 1) Credentialling
- 2) Sitting and Passing the Licensing Exam
- 3) Licensing

1. Credentialling

The report on your academic credentials by an independent evaluation service ("credentialling") is the means used by most states to determine whether they will issue a license to you. The credentialling service breaks down your education into two categories - professional (physiotherapy) and general (non-physiotherapy) education, and within each of these categories your education is further broken down into subjects, to which an appropriate number of "semester credit hours" (a standard education unit of measure) is allocated. Education programs which are considered to be US BSc equivalent will be awarded a minimum of 30 semester credit hours per year of study, for a total of at least 120 credits. This is **equivalent to the Health Professions Council application procedure** in the UK.

Some states are interested in this breakdown because they want to compare the content of your education program with the physical therapy courses taught at American colleges. The credits allocated to professional education will be broken down into subject categories like Functional Anatomy, Kinesiology, and so on, and those allocated to general education into categories such as English, Mathematics and Biology. There is no definitive standard for an American physical therapy curriculum, and the model adopted as a yardstick by each state is different. This can result in confusing situations such as one where you are deemed to lack the requisite number of credits in professional education to qualify for licensure in one state, while another state judges that you do not have enough general education credits for licensure. A small minority of states also look for credits in particular subject areas like Humanities, Sciences, and so on, or even in particular subjects like English or Physics before they will award you your license. The requirements of these states are very hard for anyone to satisfy.

The importance of experience

An inappropriate choice of state, and even of credentialling service, can result in disappointment and a considerable waste of time and money. Be warned that there is a great deal of misleading information around (even amongst recruitment agents!) - don't let this affect your decision until you have checked it out fully.

If you are deemed to be deficient in general education, you need to find out about the College Level Education Program (CLEP), through which you can add



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extra credits to your credentialing score by passing one or more straightforward multiple choice tests for which little advance preparation is required.

Information about the CLEP can be obtained from <http://collegeboard.com>

(specific web page:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/about.html>).

2. Sitting and passing the Licensing Exam²

In order to work as a physical therapist in the United States you must sit and pass the same national licensing exam that all American-trained physiotherapists take shortly after graduation. You have to sit and pass the exam before you start working.

The Licensing Exam is available through the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT). Its contact details are as follows:

Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy

509 Wythe Street

Alexandria, VA 22314

phone: 703-299-3100

Fax: 703-299-3110

Website address: www.fsbpt.org

The FSBPT provides a course outline, available to download from its website:

http://www.fsbpt.org/download/PT_Content_Outline_2002.pdf (please note that you will need Adobe Acrobat to download this document – Adobe Acrobat can be downloaded free from the following website:

www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readmain.html).

There are also sample examination questions

(<http://www.fsbpt.org/exams/sample.asp>) and also frequently asked questions

(<http://www.fsbpt.org/exams/questions.asp>)

Computer-Based Testing is being adopted by more and more states in the US. The multiple-choice format of the licensing exam lends itself perfectly to this medium. Once you have applied for your license and have been approved to sit the exam, you will be invited to one of the 200 testing bureaux in the US to make an appointment to sit the exam, which you must do within 60 days of the invitation. A complete list of the exam centres can be found at <http://securereg3.prometric.com>

It is important to prepare properly for the exam, especially as you do not have an opportunity to start working in the US before you are required to sit it.

Make sure you have access to relevant study materials (see below) and try and



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attend a review course conducted by professional exam tutors. Knowledge of American health law is required.

3. Licensing

This is the **equivalent of being registered by the HPC** in the UK.

A complete list of Licensing Authorities for each state (the equivalent of the HPC in the UK), their addresses, contact details (including websites and in certain instances, e-mail addresses) can be found on the FSBPT website at the following sub-address: <http://www.fsbpt.org/licensing/index.asp>. Or in the Appendix to this document.

You can download the candidate handbook for the examination (as long as you have Adobe Acrobat):

<http://www.fsbpt.org/download/2003CandidateHandbook.pdf>

Licensure will allow you to use the title 'physical therapist'.

8. OBTAINING A WORKING VISA³

Once you have satisfied all of your state's requirements to be allowed to start working, and you have been offered and accepted a job, your new employer can petition the US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration (BCIS) for a work permit. The work permit is formally known as an Employment Authorization Document" (EAD). Since 9/11 immigration rules have tightened. See: http://www.apta.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Physical_Therapy&Template+/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=217&ContentID=21030 This page of the American Physical Therapy Association's website also outlines areas where you might be employed.

The most common form of visa is the H-1B. The "green card" (permanent residence status) can take up to a year to obtain, and is best applied for after you have started working in the US on your H-1B.

Guidance on H-1B Visas can be found on the following website: www.h1base.com. Please note that the documentation required to obtain this type of visa, and a visa for a dependent (e.g. spouse) is extensive and specific.

H-1B Visas are usually issued for an initial period of up to three years. The initial visa can then be extended one time for up to a combined total of six years. The final stage in the process - once the work permit petition has been approved - is to collect your visa H-1B from the US Consulate in London:



Visa Section
5 Upper Grosvenor Street
London W1A 2JB
Tel: 0207 499 9000 (Consulate switchboard)

There is a Visa Information line (automated message): 09068 200 290 (24 hour) which has a standard charge of 60p per minute from a BT landline (mobile phones and other phone providers are charged at different rates).

There is an appointment and general enquiries line which has a standard charge of £1.30 per minute from a BT landline (mobile phones and other phone providers are charged at different rates): 090 55 44 4546.

Please note: the Visa Section will not accept casual callers and appointments must be booked on 090 55 44 4546.

9. US LEGISLATION - CHANGES REGARDING VISAS

The US government requires foreign educated healthcare workers who have applied for certain occupational visas to complete a screening programme to certify that they meet minimum eligibility requirements for the profession they wish to practise. You will need a temporary visa if you are planning to visit the USA to sit the licensure exam.

10. WHAT WILL THE SCREENING PROGRAMME REQUIRE?

You will be required to prove that you have a current and unencumbered licence, educational preparation comparable to the US educated physical therapist and oral and written English language skills in order to practice in the US. The means by which this will be done is yet to be decided.

For further information contact:

International Commission on Healthcare Professions
3600 Market Street, Suite 400
Philadelphia, PA 19104-22665
Phone: (215) 349 6721
Fax: (215) 349 0026
E-mail: Admini@IHP.org



11. DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST

Make sure you have the following:

1. Birth/ marriage certificate
2. Passport
3. Course transcript (See below)
4. Degree certificate
5. HPC Registration certificate
6. CSP Membership certificate (see below)
7. Letter of good standing (see below)
8. CV and evidence of experience - take your portfolio and add to it whilst away.
9. Character/professional references

Check with the appropriate websites for further details.

If you need to send copies of any documents, they will need to be notarized copies. This means that the authenticity of the copy must be attested usually by a solicitor, who is legally authorized to do so. Look in the yellow pages of the phone book.

12. CSP MEMBER SERVICES⁴

CSP Membership Certificate. If you have lost your original, you may obtain a new replacement one at a cost of £10, from the Membership Officer in the Membership Unit. Contact Martin Smith 0207 3066618.

CSP Qualifying Certificate. If you qualified by the Diploma route, certified copies are available from Elaine Venables, Registration Officer, in the Learning and Development Function. Tel 0207 3066610.

Course transcripts, giving details of course content, should normally be available from your University. In case of difficulty, please contact Elaine Venables as above. If you qualified by the Diploma route and your school is now closed, the CSP will provide a transcript.

13. YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE⁵

The Society's policy covers you for temporary assignments or placements anywhere in the world, except Australia, provided you are ordinarily resident in the UK. You must also be a fully subscribing member of the Society (category



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B/B1) and have a license to practice in the country in which you intend to practice. Members are covered for work in the **USA** and Canada up to a **maximum of 90 days' duration** to treat UK nationals only and any claims will be subject to UK jurisdiction and law. Members intending to work and live abroad on a permanent basis should arrange separate cover appropriate to the country in which they will be practising.

You are strongly advised to obtain a copy of the Society's information paper PA32D Insurance and Working Overseas, for further information. Call the Enquiry Handling Unit or visit the CSP's website. In particular, please read the restrictions dealing with accompanying sports teams abroad. If you are planning to work abroad for several months please also read the section on arranging run off cover to deal with any claims which might arise pertaining to your period of UK practice.

14. CSP - INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION

The CSP Website, via the Employment Relations and Union services function, has links to and contacts with a number of organisations with an interest to European and wider international employment, human rights and campaigning issues. See the following webpage:

<http://www.csp.org.uk/workplace/international.cfm>. Contact Warren Glover for further assistance: 020 7306 6666 ext 675.

15. HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - A SIMPLE GUIDE⁶

Professional autonomy for physical therapists in the USA is improving all the time. As of May 2005 direct access to physical therapist services is possible in thirty-nine states. Direct Access is defined as the right of the public to directly access physical therapists for evaluation examination and intervention. In the 39 states, direct access can be subdivided into two categories: omission and provisions. Of the 39 states, 14 have direct access by omission – there is no referral language in the actual state statutes. 25 states have direct access under statutory provision.

These states are as follows (including dates when direct access was granted):

Alaska (1986)
Arizona (1983)
Arkansas (1997)
California (1968)
Colorado (1988)
Delaware (1993)

Florida (1992)
Idaho (1987)
Illinois (1988)
Iowa (1988)
Kentucky (1987)
Louisiana (2003)



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Maine (1991)
Maryland (1979)
Massachusetts (1984)
Minnesota (1988)
Montana (1987)
Nebraska (1957)
Nevada (1985)
New Hampshire (1988)
New Jersey (2003)
New Mexico (1989)
North Carolina (1985)
North Dakota (1989)
Ohio (2004)
Oregon (1993)
Pennsylvania (2002)
Rhode Island (1992)
South Carolina (1998)
South Dakota (1986)
Tennessee (1999)
Texas (1991)
Utah (1985)
Virginia (2001)
Vermont (1988)
Washington (1988)
West Virginia (1984)
Wisconsin (1989)
Wyoming (2003)



In forty-eight states, physical therapists are allowed to make an initial assessment without a medical referral. However, most insurers still require a medical referral before they will reimburse the costs of treatment. In 2002, the Medicare Access to Physical Therapists Act [HR 3363] was introduced in the House of Representatives and a companion bill [S2386] was introduced in the Senate which would allow Medicare (the largest US health care insurer) to reimburse the cost of treatment without a prior medical referral.

Should you wish to check the status of direct access in any of the remaining states, please contact the state government affairs department of the APTA: its website is: http://www.apta.org/Govt_Affairs and its e-mail address is govtaffair@apta.org.

Forty-eight states allow physical therapists to conduct an initial examination without a prior medical referral. However, most medical insurers still require a medical referral before they will reimburse the cost of physical therapy services. The American Physical Therapy Association aims to achieve autonomous practice in all states by 2020.

Healthcare – Members’ Experiences

A member writes : United States hospitals are in general, smaller and more community based than those in the United Kingdom. The hospital is the primary unit of health care, rather than the General Practitioner or community team and is under regional control. Patients stay for a shorter time, on average, than in the United Kingdom. The hospital charges by the day, for all medical, nursing and physiotherapy treatment and for drugs, x-rays, tests etc.

Hospital physiotherapists do no chest work - this is done by a specially trained band of respiratory therapists - except in certain areas of East Coast especially Boston. Physiotherapists do basic breathing exercises. There is very rarely any evening or weekend on call, but all hospitals provide some weekend coverage. Usually physiotherapists might work 1 Saturday a month and 1 Sunday every month or so. Outpatient facilities often work early morning or evenings. Many outpatient facilities have hours 7am- 7pm, so people come in early or work late. Some physiotherapists work 4x10 hour work days. The standard working week is 40 hours and most places only give 6 or 7 public holidays a year – no long weekends at Christmas or Easter.

There are no structured professional grades - each physiotherapist negotiates with the hospital individually. Usually uniform is neither worn nor supplied - name badges



are mandatory, however. For legal reasons, staff must use a safety belt when transferring patients.

Another member reports:

States that are virtually impossible for UK physios to get into are Michigan, California, Texas and Oregon. Look for states that have a physio shortage. Many states now require ongoing Continuing Education (or CPD) to maintain licensure. Check with the state and make sure your employer offers Continuing Education as a benefit. Typical Continuing Education benefits are five paid days per year from \$500 to £1500 for a full time employee. Keep all your certificates of attendance as these are needed for biannual audit.

Education

Education for physical therapists in the USA is changing. Baccalaureate programmes ceased to be accredited in January 2002 and since 2001 only Masters and Doctoral entry level qualifying programmes have been developed. It is estimated that by 2020 physical therapy will be an all doctorate profession.

Assistants

Physical therapists are supported by two kinds of staff. **Physical therapist assistants** are regulated graduates who work under the direction of physical therapists on delegated tasks to provide physical therapy interventions. Modifications within the agreed treatment plan may be undertaken. **Physical therapy aides** are non-licensed workers trained by physical therapists. They function only with direct on-site continuous supervision and undertake delegated tasks that do not involve decision-making.

Insurance Issues

Malpractice insurance is provided and SOAP notes are extensively used. Every treatment must be legally documented - "if it's not in the notes, it didn't happen - and you won't be paid for it". It is necessary to demonstrate that skilled care is used in the treatment, so notes must be written with this in mind - for example, anyone can 'take a patient for a walk', physiotherapists give "gait analysis and training". 'Tippex' is absolutely forbidden when making notes - errors must be crossed out but left visible.

Most people have private health insurance through their employer; the better the job, the better the insurance. Coverage provided is variable it can be up to 80% of bills but prescriptions are rarely covered.



Types of Jobs

There are 2 main types of job in the USA:

- (i) where the hospital is your employer. The hospital tends to be more interested in your personal development and expects you to be more career orientated.
- (ii) where a staffing company is your employer so you can get moved around a lot. The hospitals have less interest in you under this arrangement.

16. OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

For information on study guides for the US licensure exam and for an online version of **Introduction to U.S. Healthcare and Physical Therapy**, visit www.apta.org under the education section and click on internationally educated physiotherapists. You can also find links to the practice acts operating in each state in the USA. These provide the legal framework of practice for physical therapists. (Also see the appendix on page 18)

World Confederation for Physical Therapy

WCPT

Kensington Charity Centre

4th Floor, Charles House

375 Kensington High Street

London W14 8QH

Tel + 44 (0) 20 7471 6765

Fax: + 44 (0) 20 7471 6766

Secretary General: Brenda Myers

Website: <http://www.wcpt.org>

E-mail: info@wcpt.org

Visit the website and click on 'membership' and USA

17. COMMUNICATE VIA E-MAIL OR THE WEB WITH PHYSIOTHERAPISTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

If you have internet access, either at home, work or through a cyber-cafe, you can join the Physio discussion list for free on the following website:

<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/physio.html>. This discussion list, for physiotherapists in education and practice, enables members all over the world to share experiences, enhance collaboration, make new contacts, aid research, announce events and keep up to date with advancements in physiotherapy.



Names and contact details of CSP Members in the USA who have said they are happy to answer some of your questions.

Colleen Harper
1436 W Superior
Chicago
Illinois 60622
Tel: 312 421 5396
Or 773 363 6700 Ext 261
Email:ceharper@Larabida.org
Or
Email: boyertv@sbcglobal.net

Mary Bennett
5908 Monroe Avenue
Evansville
Indiana 47715
Mb92@evansville.edu

Dr Giovanni De
Domenico
7010 Oakridge Drive
San Antonio
Texas 78229

Fiona Caldwell
1284 North Havenhurst
#107 West
California 90046

Ann M Low
E-Stim Hawaii
PO Box 89606
Honolulu
HI 96830-9606

Mackenzie Caldwell
Los Angeles CA
DJRLOC7@aol.com

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18. FEEDBACK SHEET

Please return this to: Liz Carrington
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
14 Bedford Row
London
WC1R 4ED
Email: carrington@csp.org.uk
Fax: +44 (0)20 7306 6611

YOUR NAME: _____

THE INFORMATION SHEET YOU ARE REFERRING TO: _____
(name of country please).

Please list any inaccuracies in the information we have provided: _____

Please list any additional information that will be useful to CSP members in the future.



Can the CSP add you to the list of members willing to be contacted about
Physiotherapy in this country?

Yes / No (please circle)

If yes, your address, phone number, fax number, e-mail number (whatever
appropriate):

CSP No: _____



This section last updated 18/03/2005.

² This section last updated 18/03/2005

³ This section last updated 18/03/2005

⁴ This section last updated in May 2005

⁵ This section last updated May 2005

⁶ This section last updated May 2005