

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Research Shows Physical Therapy Should be the First Stop for People With Back Pain**

Most people who end up seeing a physical therapist for back pain do so after seeing their family doctor, getting an x-ray or MRI, and maybe seeing an orthopedist. Current research says that this is the wrong order and that people should be seeing a physical therapist first for back pain.

Studies have shown that people who receive early PT have better outcomes, lower costs, are less likely to have surgery, use opioids or have unnecessary testing. Current clinical practice guidelines for treating low back pain support the use of manual therapy and exercise - two things that physical therapists are experts in. Unfortunately, only 2% of people with back pain start with PT, and only 7% get to PT within 90 days.

What's wrong with the other options? Stories about the opioid epidemic that the country is currently experiencing are everywhere, and the number one reason for opioids to be prescribed is back pain. The CDC has recommended against the use of opioids for back pain since 2016, and supports the use of non-drug treatments like PT.

Surgeries for back pain are common, but the outcomes are terrible. A large study looking at worker's comp patients with back pain found that people who have surgery have a 1 in 4 chance of having a repeat surgery, a 1 in 3 chance of a major complication, and a 1 in 3 chance of never returning to work again.

Despite the data showing that PT is the most effective, safest, and lowest cost option to treat low back pain, most people take far too long to get there. Almost every state has direct access, meaning that you can go directly to a physical therapist without a doctor's referral. If you see your doctor for back pain, and PT isn't one of the first treatment options, ask for it!

### **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](http://www.ppsapta.org).