

## Future Perspectives of Physical Therapy in Asia

### 6 States of Korea Physical Therapy

<sup>1)</sup>Professor, Dept. of Physical Therapy, Sahmyook University,

<sup>2)</sup>Director of Strategic Planning, KPTA

Lee Wan-hee<sup>1,2)</sup>

**Background :** The Korean Physical Therapy Association (KPTA) has been founded in 1996 and October 2015 will be the 50 anniversary. KPTA has over 55,000 members and there are 16 main branch offices in Korea. There are 49 universities with a 4-year physical therapy Undergrad program, 40 colleges with a 3-year program, and over 3,500 students graduating and successfully passing the national board licensing exams and are actively involved in hospitals, research centers, professional athletic teams, community rehabilitation centers and many local settings as physical therapists.

**Challenge for the profession :** KPTA has set two long-term goals to be achieved. The first goal is to pursue happiness and freedom of choice in the career of physical therapy, and reduce insurance costs and to expand the rights of the practice of practitioners for the purpose of promoting the health and well-being of citizens. The second goal is to expand the physical therapist scope of practice, which was bound with many limitations since its founding, to actively intervene in the national health promotion, and to be actively interested in elderly fall prevention and other prevention projects.

**Current issues and Topics :** To improve the quality of the physical ther-

apy education, we are maintaining ongoing close working relationships and communication with the Ministry of Health and Welfare and Ministry of Education, as well as establishing the Institute for Physical Therapy Curriculum and Evaluation center organized with professors and clinicians to unify the current 3-year and 4-year curriculum into one single curriculum system. Furthermore, KPTA is actively working to resolve the dramatic increases in elderly health issues in South Korea by establishing home physical therapy care programs, voucher systems for rehabilitation, personal physical therapy programs for those with disabilities, and for the well-being of industrial workers, preventative action settlement promotions are under establishment.

**Expectations for the Japanese Physical Therapy :** Over 40 underdeveloped countries in Asia require urgent attention to improve the physical therapy healthcare system, educational and institutional environment. Immediate attention and support is required and realized together to support the developing countries, and there has been a signed collaboration agreement during the Executive Council of physical therapy board of director steering committee meeting that was held in 2014 in Busan, Korea.

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### 7 Challenges and Current Issues for the Macau Physical Therapy Profession

Vice President of the Executive Committee for Macau Physical Therapists Association  
Weng In Chan

2013 saw the establishment of the Council for Medical Affairs by the Macau government, which will oversee the reform of the current registration system of fifteen different healthcare professions including those of physical therapists. The Council is made up of 43 appointed members from different healthcare fields including medical doctors, dentists, traditional Chinese medicine practitioners, pharmacists, allied health professionals and nurses, etc. To assist with the Council's plan on regulating the profession, Macau Physical Therapy Association (MPTA) has attended numerous meetings with the Council's Allied Health Professionals subgroup and has submitted position statements on : registration categories and requirements, professional competency examination and internship assessment period, scope of practice, code of ethics, and continuing professional development requirements.

Tentatively, the Council has agreed that physical therapy entry-level degree holders who are currently registered with the Health Bureau's Licensing Department or are working within the public sector, such as Health Bureau, Social Welfare Bureau, Education and Youth Affairs Bureau and Macau Sports Development Board, can be grandfathered to be registered physical therapists when the new professional certification requirements are rolled

out in the future. Physical therapists that are grandfathered will be exempted from a professional competency examination and internship assessment period of one year in duration. In addition, MPTA is advocating to the Council for direct access to physical therapy and the inclusion of acupuncture into our scope of practice. It is our hope that, with professional certification and regulation, professional competency and standards can be maintained, while the public's interest will be protected when receiving physical therapy.

Another challenge for the profession involves the Social Welfare Bureau's plan on employing overseas physical therapists to work in government-funded nursing homes and rehabilitation centers, which have been experiencing difficulty recruiting and retaining therapists due to poor remuneration and lack of career advancement. As there is no school of physical therapy in Macau, all physical therapists working in Macau obtained their training overseas. Many physical therapy students studying abroad had enquired about the Bureau's announcement, worrying that it may affect their job prospects in Macau. MPTA urges the government to consider the concerns of graduates returning to Macau in the near future and to observe licensing and qualification requirements when employing therapists.