

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Bruno U.K. Steiner, PT, DPT, LMT, RMSK

The Inevitability of PT-Directed Imaging Referral and PT-Administered Ultrasound Imaging: Ours for the Taking if We Want It! - American Physical Therapists Teaching MSKUS on the World Stage in a Leadership Role – Imaging SIG President's Message

Cherished Members of the Mighty Imaging SIG!

This year has seen heightened activity on the imaging front, to say the least. I just feel like I've been thrown a big ball of yarn snarled with strategic planning, advocacy, research, alliance-building, political expediency, plotting, and defense. And I'm here to disentangle it for you as your humble servant.

So much is happening on the twin fronts of PT-imaging referral and PT-administered ultrasound imaging that I hearken back to the question my friend and colleague Dr. James Dauber asked me after I was elected president of the Imaging SIG:

"So, do you feel like crawling up in a ball and sobbing in horror yet?"

I admit that my internal dialogue was a momentary: "Bruno Steiner, what have you done?"

But after a quick gut check and deep breath, I knew why I was doing this. I did tell Jim that the job wasn't one person's quixotic expedition, although sometimes I relate to the aged warrior goading his rickety horse, Rocinante, to battle the flailing windmills. But I shrug off that fleeting feeling of self-doubt we know too well because we are fighting on a battlefield where I breathe in a lungful of inexorability, leading us to fulfill our ultimate primary care role.

Inexorability, you ask? I admit, I just wanted to use that word. It just sounds so good.

Let me dump the clumsy attempt at floral prosaic and the accompanying manure it grows on.

As a fellow health scientist, I am not only armed with scientific evidence and institutional support but also with the feeling of impending inevitability for our profession. I am certain that our strained medical care delivery system, with its inefficiencies in musculoskeletal healthcare delivery coupled with the worsening crisis-level shortages of physicians and nursing shortfalls, needs us to be part of the solution for urban and rural care. This promises to worsen, given our aging population. Want more 'macro-level' proof? The USA isn't alone in shouldering the problem. According to the 2015 World Health Organization report, musculoskeletal conditions are the fourth most significant disease burden globally.¹

I decided to join this battle because of our collective appetite for change and the need to deploy our underleveraged skills for the public good. Ultimately, we know what our profession and patients need. We want to fully engage in optimizing patient care and primary care practice. In my experience, I felt we couldn't be fully 'plugged in' as effective partners in multidisciplinary care without our own imaging modality and imaging referral privileges.

The feedback from the weekly conversations I'm having with

members and non-members reflects a mood shift and a brewing impatience, coupled with an unwillingness to suffer the same traditional rivals, both externally and internally. We want to fully engage as working partners in caring for our patients, community, and public health.

Physical Therapists and the public are increasingly aware as more studies and reports come out that movement promotes health and longevity, and we are incredibly well-positioned as a profession blessed with a young workforce. We are the Neuromusculoskeletal experts and movement experts. Don't believe me. Ask the Department of Defense, a federal branch of our government, who just gave us that distinction. And don't get me started with "Oh, well, that's different than the civilian population physical therapist" yarn. We ALL went to the same schools and received the same training.

So, reflecting on my conviction at the beginning of my term as president that imaging was the most critical issue that primary care PT faced... I am, in fact, even more convinced of it now... the evidence from researchers in PT-directed imaging proves that I am not drinking from the toxic Kool-aid spigot.

Unexpectedly, an encouraging number of our nationwide board members appear to be recognizing that their role is not only to police the practice act and licensees for the protection of the healthcare consumer but to leverage the Physical Therapist's modernized skillset and primary care expertise for the promotion of our public's health and well-being.

I am also heartened by the advocates I meet with increasing frequency who are fed up with the status quo and want to reflect modernity and current educational and professional realities in Physical Therapy practice. My colleagues and I at the AOPT are delighted by a growing desire for Imaging referral privileges and diagnostic ultrasound imaging. I love to engage with our newly found collaborators spanning some 11 states who are actively seeking imaging referral privileges or countering hostile stakeholders. And these are 'real' irons in the fire. I would love to tell you about them, but I must hold out as per their requests. We all understand that we don't want rival stakeholders to see our cards. In our following fall newsletter, we should have some very positive news to report. But here's what I can tell you.

Colorado and Arizona are Officially in the Win Column.... Alaska and Nevada are on the Cusp

Hot off the press, it's an exciting time to be a primary care physical therapist in Colorado and Arizona! In Colorado, full imaging privileges, durable medical equipment prescription, and DPT/physiotherapist branding language signed into our practice act by the governor! Not to be outdone, Arizona, unsatisfied with being limited to radiography referral, just won its drive to full imaging privileges and has won in the house. The bill is literally on the governor's desk to be signed. Alaska has made remarkable gains with a declaratory state board statement. Alaskan advocacy juggernaut and I-SIG collaborator Dr. Jeff Gordon, DPT, OCS, in his role of APTA Alaska Imaging Group Chair, brought forward an expertly crafted inquiry to the board, providing the

board and their legal team with context, precedent, institutional and organizational support and realities, and ultimately the clever questions regarding ‘duty to refer to a *qualified provider*’ (per AK Practice Act language), prohibition to imaging referral. Pertinently, among the citations, Jeff included:

1. The FSBPT model practice act language,
The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy: The FSBPT’s *Model Practice Act for Physical Therapy, 7th edition*, states that the practice of physical therapy means determining a diagnosis and plan of intervention and **referring** patients/clients “to other healthcare providers and facilities for services and **testing** to inform the physical therapist plan of care.”

The Model Practice Act defines “testing” as:

22. “Testing” means standard methods and techniques used to gather data about the patient/client, including but not limited to **imaging**, electrodiagnostic and electrophysiologic tests and measures

2. The APTA HOD P06-12-10-09 acknowledgment concerning ‘Diagnosis by Physical Therapists’ which states:
“When indicated, Physical Therapists order appropriate tests, including but not limited to **imaging** and other studies, that are performed and interpreted by other health professions. Physical Therapists may also perform or interpret selected imaging or other studies.”
3. As well as our own newly revised *APTA’s Academy of Orthopaedic Physical Therapy and Imaging Special Interest Group’s Physical Therapist-Directed Imaging Resource Guide: A Review of Current Evidence* (Steiner et al., 2023)

As the Owner of Fairbanks Physical Therapy, Jeff wanted to provide expedited, efficient PT care delivery to his patients and dug into the issue. APTA Alaska President Alex Kay wisely gave his blessing to move forward with the effort, and thus began our collaboration with him to help craft this question. I cannot overstate that this question was picked over by the state board legal team and produced the ruling in our favor on all inquiry components.

I think the Alaska ruling is definitely a ‘win’ for imaging, but the next step is to update the Alaska Administrative Code, which I understand may not require a vote. In good faith, the AK board is cooperating to help with the next steps, and Dr. Gordon, armed with this positive board declaration, already has an appointment with AK Governor Dunleavy to move this forward. In a subsequent report, I will provide a deeper dive into the model inquiry and the response.

Similarly, APTA Nevada’s brilliant President, Dr. Susan Priestman, DPT, OCS, has coordinated with us to bring a timely inquiry to the Nevada State Board of Physical Therapy with a similarly crafted model question, including the same context and professional/organizational precedent, coupled with some modifications tweaked to Nevada’s silent practice act.

We have excellent reason to believe this will be a positive outcome. We believe the board understands the clear and present need to acknowledge our skillsets in the context of the public’s great need for our services. Susan and I are like cats waiting at the mousehole for the response.

I will repeat this for anyone who is planning an inquiry. Please consult with us to craft your inquiry for your respective state boards. Do not shoot our profession in the metatarsals by asking a poorly phrased, simplistic, and dare I say, naïve line of questions. You must think expediently to elicit a desirable outcome.

The Evidence is on Our Side: Imaging SIG Meetings with New Evidence from Drs Lance Mabry, Aaron Keil, Stephen Kareha, Evan Nelson, Scott Tauferner, Kelly Clark, Brian Baranyi

We have you covered if you couldn’t attend our membership meetings on March 27th and April 30th, 2024. Just check our Imaging SIG webpage, and they are posted:

On March 27th, 2024, investigator Dr. Lance Mabry presented Physical Therapist Awareness of Diagnostic Imaging Referral Jurisdictional Scope of Practice: An Observational Study. And given Lance’s entrenched involvement in physical therapy advocacy, we got deep into the brass-knuckle tactics used by rival stakeholding adversaries in the horse-trading game of politics.

On April 30th, 2024, our panel of researchers, Aaron Keil, Stephen Kareha, Evan Nelson, Scott Tauferner, and Kelly Clark, granted us a privileged first look at some seriously impactful data as they presented and discussed Ordering of Diagnostic Imaging by Physical Therapists: a multi-center analysis of successful implementation. This will be submitted soon for publication. This is a crucial study to inform public policy in a nation beset by crisis-level and worsening physician and nursing shortfalls... and the data needs to get out there.

The AOPT has a YouTube Channel, and the Imaging SIG Content is Trending!

Yeah, I can’t even believe I just said that. However, it shows that imaging is crucial to our professional cause and the care of our patients. There’s a lot of content and interviews, so check it out. Big kudos to Tara Fredrickson, our Assistant Executive Director, who keeps the wheels turning at the great AOPT and makes sure the membership meetings rumble along, and to Amber Floryance, AOPT Communications Coordinator, who keeps creating and editing our content for all our members.



UCSD’s Peter Aguero, DPT, RMSK, Instructing Physicians and Physiotherapists in Madrid

MSKUS-trained American Physical Therapists Teaching the World at the World Federation of Hemophilia Congress 2024 in Madrid

I can't begin to tell you how much physical therapists show leadership in MSKUS teaching on the global stage for Hemophilia care. Physical therapists in Hemophilia use MSKUS to detect hemarthrosis and hematoma and to differentially diagnose hemiarthropathic pain/impingement from hemarthrosis. They also use MSKUS to longitudinally monitor joint health for all extremities.

It was a thrill to be in Madrid to see such a robust show of leadership and a passion for teaching as Doctor of Physical Therapy Cindy Bailey masterfully led a day-long MSKUS class of 120 participants, among whom were USA-based MSKUS-trained PTs Mark Krimmel, DPT, RMSK, Peter Aguero, DPT, RMSK, Jeff Kallberg, DPT, Grace Hernandez, PT, Curtis Yee, MPT, RMSK, Fred Loeffler, DPT, Tiffany Kaltenmark, DPT, and me!!! And yes, you don't need an RMSK to become an expert like my fellow American or international Physical Therapy colleagues.

Speaking of which, I must mention our dear MSKUS-trained expert international Physiotherapists: Karen Strike, MSPT from Canada, Merel Timmer, PT, PhD, from the Netherlands, and Carla Dafuncho, PT, from Argentina. Co-instructing with us were internationally known physicians/researchers: Gianluigi Pasta, Matteo Di Minno, Carlo Martinoli, Nihal Bakeer, and our west-coast powerhouse Annette Van Drygalski, who has been a pillar of support to the physical therapy community.

Words cannot express the success of this event and the positive feedback we received. Cindy Bailey never ceases to amaze me with these events, which at best seem impossible at worst and improbable at the least, to manage and execute, but she did... again.



Bruno Steiner, DPT, LMT, RMSK, President Imaging SIG, Instructing MSKUS at WFH Congress 2024 in Madrid

Closing Comments

Dr. Lance Mabry and I have been working on the nationwide imaging privileges scorecard and are updating it for you. I've done a first cut with a serrated blade, but now Lance has spent A LOT of time finishing a full review with surgical precision to ensure we've got it right. Lance has been crucial to the efforts, and we are

deeply appreciative of his ongoing efforts at the AOPT's Imaging SIG.

I will close with a note of optimism for our profession, and I want to express that it is OUR profession. Do not give away your agency to another lobby, stakeholder, rival, or opponent. We must reassess our toxic relationships or codependences and create new alliances. An emerging friendship will be found in radiologists at the independent level. We will also begin to talk with the American College of Radiology. It is time to find new friends if our old adversaries continue to obstruct us and, frankly, see no value in us. I know our value. Our patients know our value.

Keep representing!!

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REFERENCE

1. Briggs AM, Cross MJ, Hoy DH, et al. Musculoskeletal Health Conditions Represent a Global Threat to Healthy Aging: A Report for the 2015 World Health Organization World Report on Ageing and Health. *Gerontologist*. 2016;56 Suppl 2:S243-55.

Have you checked out AOPT's YouTube Channel?

The Imaging SIG has the following content available for you to view:

- Revolutionizing PT: The Power of MSKUS & PT Imaging Referral
- The World of PT Imaging Referral
- DPT Imaging Education: Will Graduates Be Prepared for Today and Tomorrow's Practice
- Imaging for PTs Passed! Now What? the ND Experience
- Colorado Physical Therapists are Ordering Imaging...& the Sky Has Not Fallen
- PT Awareness of Diagnostic Imaging Referral
- The PTs' Role in Disrupting our 'Sickness Model'
- Ordering of Diagnostic Imaging by PTs: Analysis of Successful Implementation