

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is officially fall and just like that the year is almost over. For me 2022 has certainly flown by as I have been keeping myself busy at work with my clinic and consulting business, and at home as my daughter is now turning 1 year old! People told me that my life would change once she was born, and I knew it would, but I didn't expect to change it as much as it did in terms of me needing to fine tune my time-management skills. It has certainly given me a whole new appreciation for those of us who started a new business, especially for anyone who does so while raising little ones at home. With that being said, in this issue's article we wanted to highlight some folks who have branched out of the traditional clinical role that we have as physical therapists and ventured out into opening their own business in this field while still using their knowledge and skills as canine physical therapists.

I also wanted to take the chance to remind you all of some of the benefits you have as members of the Animal PT SIG. Earlier this year we started hosting quarterly educational webinars, and you also have access to those replays on your membership section of our website at <https://www.orthopt.org>. Last March, Lisa Bedenbaugh gave us a presentation on *Rehabilitation and Management of Dogs with Hip Dysplasia*, and in June we had Jenny Moe and Jill Kuhl present on *Dysfunction of the Lumbo-Pelvic-Hip Complex in Human vs Canine Clients*. Furthermore, Jenny Moe and I also hosted a Q&A last February focused on answering questions from physical therapists and students who wanted to learn more about the field of animal physical therapy. Topics covered included certification process, state legislation, job outlook, etc. All of those webinars, and more, are accessible to you as members of the Animal PT SIG, and if you have any questions, I am always just an email away.

Thank you,  
Francisco Maia, PT, DPT, CCRT  
*Animal PT SIG President*  
[fmaia@orthopt.org](mailto:fmaia@orthopt.org)

## BRANCHING OUT IN ANIMAL REHABILITATION: PHYSICAL THERAPISTS TAKE ON DIFFERENT ROLES IN THE PROFESSION

*Lisa Bedenbaugh, PT, CCRP*  
*Jenny Moe, PT, MS, DPT, CCRT, APT (NV)*

The field of animal rehabilitation is a rapidly growing niche in the area of veterinary medicine. The pioneers in the field began treating in the early 1990s, and the first conference focusing on rehabilitation of animals was held in Corvallis, OR in 1999. Certification programs were developed, with Northeast Seminars/University of Tennessee awarding their first graduates in 2002, and Canine Rehabilitation Institute following in 2003. Early on, working in this field meant direct hands-on patient care, but as animal rehabilitation has grown and matured, physical therapists are finding business opportunities in areas other than clinical practice. This article will introduce you to some of these entrepreneurs,

and show you how your knowledge and talents can be used to help both clients and others practicing in the field.

## PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

In the early years of animal rehabilitation, almost all equipment used was either adapted from human physical therapy/fitness items or hand-built. Physical therapists are uniquely qualified to create new products, as we are constantly working on how to solve mobility and environmental issues for our patients. Often, there is no pre-made solution available, so we fabricate adaptive equipment to help the client to function more easily or independently. Similarly, many of the pre-made therapeutic equipment for humans did not conform to the needs of the animal rehabilitation practitioner, so a couple of physical therapists figured out how to develop and manufacture equipment more suited to the needs and challenges of those working in the animal realm.

Lisa Bedenbaugh is a physical therapist who spent the first 15 years of her career working in traditional physical therapy clinics and hospitals before finding out about animal rehabilitation. She started looking into this newly emerging field and was instantly hooked, receiving her certification in canine rehabilitation (CCRP) in 2003, and beginning to work part-time in the veterinary field. Over the next several years, she gradually transitioned over fully to animal rehabilitation. She was finding times where she was struggling to both support and be able to gait train a weak dog, or be able to complete certain therapeutic exercises because she didn't have equipment that was compatible to her needs. She enlisted the help of her husband, Scott, and together they began designing and building prototypes of support systems and therapeutic exercise equipment to fit her clinical needs. As the field continued to grow, she realized other therapy practitioners were having similar struggles in their daily practice, so she and her husband founded Canine Rehab Systems, which manufactures and sells support systems, durable medical equipment for small animal rehabilitation centers, and other therapeutic/fitness equipment. She is also a co-founder of K9 Align, which developed a wearable therapeutic garment for dogs with hip dysplasia and other similar issues. This came about from her frustration with kinesiotape not always sticking well to the dogs' fur, and her awareness that there was a gap between very light Ace wrap-type solutions and rigid bracing for the hip, so she helped design a full body garment for dogs with mild to moderate hip dysplasia that wouldn't interfere with normal movement patterns. Lisa receives satisfaction from seeing other practitioners being able to perform their jobs more safely and efficiently, as well as seeing pet owners notice their mobility impaired dogs living a better quality of life using products she helped develop. Lisa has helped support the APTA's Animal PT SIG as the newsletter editor for almost 10 years.

Jenny Moe, PT, MS, DPT, CCRT, APT (Nevada) began her career in physical therapy specializing in pediatrics, and specifically in the use of adaptive equipment such as the TheraSuit, TheraTogs, and custom bracing to help her patients. There was often a need for adapting existing equipment, or making her own, to suit the needs of her growing and complex patients. When Jenny tran-

sitioned into animal physical therapy in 2009, she saw the need for innovation and carryover of ideas for her canine and feline patients. Jenny continued to make many of her own devices, such as dorsiflex assist straps, support and proprioception garments, and adaptations to wheelchairs, or carts, as she prefers to call them. There was little instruction provided at the time of earning her certification in canine rehabilitation (CCRT) about bracing, assistive devices, or carts. Thankfully, Jenny was able to draw from her extensive experience in pediatrics to help her expansive population of patients, working at a busy specialty animal practice in the San Francisco Bay Area, and began to share her knowledge with fellow therapists.

At the end of 2020, Jenny had the opportunity to purchase and take over one of the longest operating animal wheelchair businesses, Doggon' Wheels. She and her husband, Ron Moe, moved the company to San Francisco in January 2021 after training with the original owners/founders, Lori and Chad Holbein. Jenny and Ron have made small improvements to the existing designs, and hope to continue to evolve the carts to meet the needs of all of their clients, from 2-pound rabbits to 200-pound Mastiffs. Jenny's knowledge as a physical therapist combined with Ron's engineering/drafting background provided the perfect pairing to save the company and help it grow. Doggon' Wheels was always Jenny's preference for most cases, and she is now honored to be able to help animals all over the world. She is also able to consult with owners and professionals to progress the rehab provided, and teach new ideas. She did dip her toe into clinical mentoring, but prefers to keep that on a more individual basis. Jenny is proud to see other clinicians expand their knowledge and skills through her guidance and products provided from Doggon' Wheels. She is also the current Vice President of the APT SIG.

## BUSINESS COACHING

Francisco Maia, PT, DPT, CCRT is not only our APTA Animal Physical Therapy SIG President, but also the founder of a suc-

cessful business coaching enterprise, The K9PT Academy. Francisco started his career in animal physical therapy in Chicago, IL working for a veterinary practice. He was paid the same wages as an entry level veterinary assistant, despite his credentials as a certified canine rehabilitation therapist (CCRT) and doctor of physical therapy. Francisco was able to take the experience he gained at the practice and go out on his own, founding his mobile practice, The K9PT. In 2021, Francisco opened his brick and mortar practice, which is thriving in Chicago with multiple physical therapists and staff.

In 2019, Francisco launched his pilot program, The K9PT Academy. Combining an online platform with live calls weekly, Francisco shared his knowledge to help expand the number of physical therapists working in canine rehabilitation, so that they could also be successful in their own endeavors and open/expand their own businesses. Francisco has had multiple rounds of the Academy with many success stories around the country of his mentees thriving in solo practice. Together with the program, a busy Facebook group helps to engage a wide audience of physical therapists both certified and interested, in discussion about popular topics and advocacy for the field. In August 2022, The K9PT Academy Podcast was added to Francisco's offerings in order to reach a wider audience. He realized over the last few years that veterinary rehabilitation professionals struggled with knowing how to adjust their rates to reflect their true value, run their businesses efficiently, and that this was not isolated to the United States. His audience has grown internationally, and the need for the podcast was realized.

Francisco is passionate about promoting physical therapists in the field of veterinary rehabilitation, our value and expertise, and helping more physical therapists make the transition into animal practice. He strives to make it easier for therapists to learn about the field and transition with ease, and to earn what they deserve to be paid for their knowledge.



*Dr. Jenny Moe, fitting a Doggon' Wheels client in San Francisco, CA.*



*Lisa Bedenbaugh, PT, CCRP, demonstrating the K9 Align.*

## CLINICAL MENTORING

Amie Hesbach, PT, DPT, CCRP, CCRT is one of the first dozen or so physical therapists treating animals in the United States. She has a wealth of practical and clinical knowledge from years of working in large veterinary specialty practices, as well as having completed a residency in Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF), a national certification in Pilates, and a certification in KinesioTaping. When Amie first started out in the animal rehabilitation field, the numbers of practitioners in this field were very small, and most therapists were spread out across the country, which made learning from each other difficult. This was before video calls and other technology were in place to make collaboration relatively easy. She explains that she felt rather isolated, and longed for the ability of colleagues to “lend a second set of eyes or hands in helping to problem-solve those most challenging cases.” More recently, she founded EmpowerPhysio and provided in-home rehabilitation services to pet owners in the Boston, Massachusetts area. Having her own solo practice taught her business



Amie Hesbach, teaching a cohort.



Dr. Francisco Maia with the first round of The K9PT Academy mentees in Chicago, IL

and administration skills, as well as being more aware of how her pet clients have to function in their own home environments.

In 2019, she and her family moved to The Netherlands for 3 years due to her husband's work. Being several hundred miles away from her clients in Massachusetts, as well as most of her animal rehabilitation colleagues, required her to shift her business model to more of an educational realm, and embrace the technology to connect with others around the globe. She developed EmpowerPhysio Educate, which is a clinical mentoring program made up of on-demand video training, in-person workshops/lectures and group and one-on-one coaching sessions, to help other animal rehabilitation professionals improve their knowledge and skill base. She has enjoyed getting to know clinicians from all over the world and see how the education programs in various countries have both similarities and differences. She has also been able to have a better appreciation for the challenges that clinicians face in their practices around the globe. Amie has also served as a past president of the APT SIG.

As the field of animal rehabilitation has grown and matured, several physical therapists in the field have also branched out from full time direct patient care into other niches within the field. Their contributions have helped to support those practitioners working directly with patients and clients, through fostering better clinical and business skills and providing more options for assistive devices for their patients in need. We hope to see other clinicians with special skill sets also continue to branch out and further the profession even more in the future.

## ARE YOU READY TO ADD CANINE REHABILITATION TO YOUR PHYSICAL THERAPY SKILLS?



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- Certification programs for physical therapy and veterinary professionals
- Small classes and hands-on learning
- Continuing education

"Thank you to all of the instructors, TAs, and supportive staff for making this experience so great! My brain is full, and I can't wait to transition from human physical therapy to canine."

— Sunny Rubin, MSPT, CCRT, Seattle, Washington

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The physical therapists in our classes tell us that working with four-legged companions is both fun and rewarding.



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