

Table 5. Selected technical skills required in PT and PTA program curricula (page 1 of 2)

PT programs	PTA programs
<p>Patient screening and examination aerobic capacity, endurance anthropometric characteristics arousal, mentation, cognition assistive and adaptive devices community, work reintegration cranial nerve integrity environmental, home, work barriers ergonomics, body mechanics gait, assisted locomotion, balance integumentary integrity joint integrity, mobility motor function muscle performance (strength, power, endurance) neuromotor development, sensory integration orthotic, protective, supportive devices pain posture prosthetic requirements range of motion (including muscle length) reflex integrity self care, home management (ADLs and IADLs) sensory integrity ventilation, respiration, circulation</p> <p>Evaluation Diagnosis Prognosis Develop plan of care Intervention <i>All Intervention skills listed for PTAs on right</i> <i>Skills specific to PTs (not included in entry-level PTA curricula)</i> airway clearance techniques (e.g., suctioning, flutter valves) ambulation with manual resuscitator bag or portable ventilator debridement, wound care electrotherapeutic modalities ergonomics training functional training in community/work reintegration functional training in self care/home management IADLs (e.g., maintaining a home, shopping, cooking, home chores, heavy household chores, and driving a car or using public transport) manual therapy techniques joint mobilization and manipulation (peripheral joints and spine) manual lymphatic drainage</p>	<p>Therapy implementation; follows Plan of Care designed by PT <i>Functional training</i> ADLs assistive/adaptive devices body mechanics developmental activities gait, locomotion training prosthetics, orthotics wheelchair management skills <i>Infection control procedures</i> (isolation/sterile techniques) <i>Manual therapy techniques</i> (passive ROM, therapeutic massage) <i>Physical, mechanical agents</i> athermal agents biofeedback compression therapies cryotherapy electrotherapeutic agents hydrotherapy superficial and deep thermal agents traction <i>Therapeutic exercise</i> aerobic conditioning balance, coordination training breathing exercises, coughing techniques conditioning, reconditioning posture awareness training range of motion exercises stretching exercises strengthening exercises <i>Wound management</i> application, removal of dressings/agents identification of precautions for dressing removal Data collection to carry out plan of care <i>Aerobic capacity, endurance</i> measures standard vital signs recognizes, monitors responses to position & activity changes <i>Anthropometrical characteristics</i> (measurement) <i>Arousal, mental, cognition</i> (recognizes change) <i>Assistive, adaptive, orthotic, protective, supportive, prosthetic devices</i> identifies patient/caregiver ability to care for device recognizes changes in skin condition while using device recognizes safety factors while using device <i>Gait, locomotion, balance</i> (describes safety, status, progression)</p>

Table 5. Selected technical skills required in PT and PTA program curricula (page 2 of 2)

PT programs	PTA programs
<p> manual traction patient-related instruction physical agents, mechanical modalities prescription, application, fabrication of adaptive, assistive, orthotic, protective, supportive devices and equipment patient-related instruction ventilatory muscle training wound management debridement—selective: sharp debridement oxygen therapy (e.g., topical, supplemental) Patient-related instruction Documentation Takes appropriate action in an emergency </p>	<p> <i>Integumentary integrity</i> recognizes absent or altered sensation recognizes normal or abnormal integumentary changes recognizes activities, positioning, postures that aggravate or relieve pain, altered sensations, or skin trauma <i>Joint integrity and mobility</i> (recognizes normal and abnormal movement) <i>Muscle performance</i> measures strength by manual muscle testing observes presence or absence of muscle mass recognizes normal and abnormal muscle length recognizes changes in muscle tone <i>Neuromotor development</i> (recognizes gross/fine motor milestones, righting and equilibrium reactions) <i>Pain</i> (administers pain scales; recognizes activities, positioning, postures that aggravate or relieve pain or altered sensations) <i>Posture</i> (describes posture, recognizes trunk/extremity alignment) <i>Range of motion</i> (measures functional range; uses goniometer) <i>Self-care, home management, community/work reintegration</i> inspects physical environment, measures space recognizes safety and barriers in environments recognizes level of functional status administers standardized questionnaires <i>Ventilation, respiration, circulation examination</i> recognizes cyanosis recognizes activities that aggravate or relieve edema, pain, dyspnea describes chest wall expansion and excursion describes cough and sputum characteristics <i>Adjusts interventions w/in care plan in response to clinical indications and reports to supervising PT</i> <i>Recognizes when intervention should not be provided due to changes in patient status and reports to supervising PT</i> <i>Reports any changes in the patient's status to supervising PT</i> <i>Recognizes when direction to perform intervention is beyond what is appropriate for a PTA; initiates clarification w/ PT</i> <i>Participates in educating patient/caregiver, as directed by PT</i> Provides patient-related instruction based on the care plan Documentation Takes appropriate action in an emergency </p>

Note: PT is physical therapist; PTA is physical therapist assistant. Additional curriculum requirements exist in PT and PTA programs. This table focuses on patient evaluation and intervention skills.

Source: Urban Institute analysis of *Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education Accreditation Handbook*, (2000); and *A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Assistant Education: Version 99* (1999).