AMENDMENT TO VHA HANDBOOK 1170.04, REMOVING THE REQUIREMENTS OF A PHYSICAL THERAPY PLAN OF CARE CO-SIGNATURE

1. This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) notice is to notify Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Integrated Service Networks and VA medical facilities that a Physical Therapy (PT) rehabilitation plan of care no longer requires co-signature by a Physician/Non-Physician Practitioner, or other qualifying health care provider.

2. VHA Offices of Primary Care, Rehabilitation and Prosthetic Services, Health Information Management, and Chief Business Office, with consultation from the Office of General Counsel, reached this consensus after reviewing current VA policies and procedures, as well as community standards, for the provision of PT services. Elimination of the co-signature requirement for the PT plan of care is expected to improve access to PT services while reducing documentation burden for the Physician or other qualifying health care providers. This decision will not impact VA’s ability to bill third party payers.

3. Due to changes in community standards, VA medical facilities should consider implementing Direct Access principles for PT. As of January 1, 2015, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the US Virgin Islands allow patients to seek treatment from a licensed PT without a prescription or referral from a Physician or other qualifying health care provider. This is consistent with PT practice in the Department of Defense.

4. This guidance is an update to the current guidance provided in VHA Handbook 1170.04, Rehabilitation Continuum of Care, dated December 30, 2014 and will be added during the next revision.

5. Training and guidance on implementation of this change will be provided in collaboration from the aforementioned VHA Offices throughout fiscal year 2017. Questions on this guidance should be directed to VHA Rehabilitation and Prosthetic Services (10P4R) at 202-461-7444.

6. This VHA notice will be archived as of June 30, 2018. However, the amendment information will remain in effect.

Poonam Alaigh, M.D.
Acting Under Secretary for Health