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| Table 1. Physiotherapy marketing examples | |
| **NON-EVIDENCE-BASED MARKETING** | |
| **Source** | **Quotes** |
| **MESSAGE: “Early physical therapy can reduce the need for opioids, imaging and surgery”** | |
| The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) launched the #ChoosePT campaign to ‘battle’ the opioid epidemic  <http://www.apta.org/PTinMotion/News/2016/6/7/ChoosePTCampaignLaunch/> | *“Research shows that physical therapist treatment can reduce or eliminate the need for opioids by improving physical function, increasing range of motion, and decreasing pain."* |
| A viewpoint in the Journal of Orthopaedic Sports Physical Therapy[3] on “Physical Therapists’ Role in Solving the Opioid Epidemic” | *“Physical therapists need to educate referral sources that early access to physical therapy decreases costs and health care utilization, including advanced imaging, drugs, and surgery.”* |
| The Conversation published an article on how “Physical therapy could lower need for opioids, but lack of money and time are hurdles”  <https://theconversation.com/physical-therapy-could-lower-need-for-opioids-but-lack-of-money-and-time-are-hurdles-92169> | *“Physical therapy could diminish the need for opioids, and thus lower the risk of addiction…getting to a physical therapist sooner rather than later decreases the use of opioid medication”* |
| **THE EVIDENCE:** There is no high-quality evidence that early physical therapy reduces use of opioids, surgery or imaging for patients with low back pain [4-6], but there is high-quality evidence that early physical therapy is not superior to usual care for low back pain [3]. | |
| **MESSAGE: “Early physical therapy is proven for low back pain and can save people money”** | |
| MoveForwardPT.com published two news articles on the benefits of early physical therapy  <https://www.moveforwardpt.com/Resources/Detail/low-back-pain-why-you-should-get-physical-therapy->  <https://www.moveforwardpt.com/LowBackPain> | Article #1: *“Physical therapy is a proven and cost-effective treatment option that you should consider as a first choice…early physical therapy for low back pain significantly lowers the total scope and cost of care.”*  Article #2: *“Most cases of low back pain are not serious and will respond well to conservative treatments such as treatment by a physical therapist.”* |
| The APTA published a news article titled “Most Americans Live with Low Back Pain – and Don’t Seek Treatment”  <http://www.apta.org/Media/Releases/Consumer/2012/4/4/> | *"Many people don't realize they can prevent or treat the condition with the help of a physical therapist…If pain lasts more than a few days or gets worse, it may be advisable to make an appointment with a physical therapist.”* |
| #GetPT1st – a twitter handle endorsed by #ChoosePT and with over 10,000 followers – often uses hyperbole to market early physical therapy | *“Did you recently hurt your back? Getting physical therapy within 14 days of injury can save you some serious money! Don't wait, call a physical therapist today.”* |
| **THE EVIDENCE:** There is high-quality evidence that early physical therapy is not superior to usual care for low back pain, and that early physical therapy leads to higher total healthcare costs [3]. This supports the fact that the vast majority of low back pain requires no formal treatment [7]. | |
| **MESSAGE: “Physical therapy should be involved in population health screening to prevent chronic pain”** | |
| The above viewpoint1 and the APTA advocates for annual health check-ups delivered by a physical therapist  <http://www.apta.org/AnnualCheckup/> | *“Physical therapists have the education, experience, and expertise necessary to provide a broad health screening…It may also lead to a referral for a physical therapist evaluation and treatment plan”*  *“[Physical therapists are] in an ideal position to not only pluck individuals from the river of chronic pain, but to also prevent them from falling into the river in the first place.”*  *“Physical therapists can play a key role in treating as well as preventing chronic pain.”* |
| **THE EVIDENCE:** There is no evidence that physical therapy check-ups prevent chronic pain. Regular health check-ups in general practice have been identified as an example of low-value care in Choosing Wisely: *“[For asymptomatic adults] don’t routinely perform annual general health checks that include a comprehensive physical examination and lab testing”* (recommendation from the Society of General Internal Medicine). | |
| **MESSAGE: “Choose physical therapy instead of dangerous medical care”** | |
| The above viewpoint [2] highlighted the harms of surgery and opioids to promote increased utilisation of physical therapy | *“the physical therapy profession can take a leading role in health care and health promotion, with the ultimate goal being a reduction in the need for more dangerous health interventions like opioid medications and surgery.”* |
| **THE ISSUE:** Promoting physical therapy on the basis of ineffective medical care portrays a fight for market share that could foster rivalry between providers and reduce the provision of effective team-based care. | |
| **EVIDENCE-BASED MARKETING** | |
| **MESSAGE: “Practice judicious use of effective physiotherapy treatments”** | |
| An editorial in the Journal of Physiotherapy [8] on “Wise choices: making physiotherapy care more valuable” | *“[Marketing] would be more valuable if targeted towards conditions that usually do not resolve spontaneously and where physiotherapy care is well supported by evidence (eg, exercise for knee osteoarthritis).”* |
| Australian Physiotherapy Association ‘Choose Physio” campaign  <https://choose.physio/your-body/lower-back/acute-non-specific-low-back-pain> | *“While specific exercises are not useful for relieving pain, returning to the normal physical activities you do around the house and at work is very important… Many people with acute non-specific low back pain require minimal physiotherapy treatment”* |
| Chartered Society of Physiotherapy  <http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/physiotherapy-works-chronic-pain> | *“If you have pain that lasts for more than six weeks, please consult a physio or your GP…Manual therapy or acupuncture may produce short term benefit, but evidence supports the use of active treatments such as therapeutic exercise.”* |
| ‘PT in Motion’ (an initiative of the APTA) published a news article on how physical therapists need to act on the evidence for low back pain <http://www.apta.org/PTinMotion/News/2018/03/30/LancetLBP/> | *"The critical need to close the evidence-practice gap across all aspects of spine care…applies to physical therapy as much as it does to all other providers”* |
| **MESSAGE: “Acknowledge the importance of team-based care”** | |
| Australian Physiotherapy Association ‘Choose Physio’ campaign  <https://choose.physio/your-body/lower-back/persistent-non-specific-low-back-pain> <http://www.physiotherapy.asn.au/APAWCM/Physio_and_You/APAWCM/Physio_and_You/Back_Pain.aspx> | *“[Physiotherapists] contribute to the team-based care…Different professionals, including physiotherapists, GPs and psychologists, work together to help with these different aspects of low back pain.”*  *“Effective treatments are available from your local physio or GP.”* |
| Chartered Society of Physiotherapy  <http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/physiotherapy-works-chronic-pain>  <http://www.csp.org.uk/your-health/exercise-advice/back-pain> | *“Multidisciplinary pain management programmes including physiotherapy are an effective intervention for people with chronic pain and cost-saving compared to physiotherapy alone.”*  *“If your back pain is affecting your activity and is persisting, ask your GP about referral to a physiotherapist.”* |
| ‘PT in Motion’ published a news article on how physical therapists need to act on the evidence for low back pain <http://www.apta.org/PTinMotion/News/2018/03/30/LancetLBP/> | *“Care for patients with chronic conditions such as low back pain is inherently multidisciplinary…and PTs should welcome the chance to be a part of these programs.”* |