By Chris Marrone, MPT, ATC

As many of you know, legislation is constantly changing in the United States. The State of Pennsylvania is not immune to these changes, and, more importantly, the healthcare industry is not immune as well. Some of these changes are for the worse, as in the Medicare Cap. However, as weird as it sounds, some of these changes and new laws actually do some good. This can be seen in a piece of legislation called Direct Access.

Today more than ever, the people in this country are on the go; in the workplace, at home, and even in the gym. People have more of a sense of health consciousness than they ever have. It is this pursuit of physical fitness and the promotion of wellness that have helped to escalate the number of injuries and even the costs of health care. Therefore, focus has been placed on how to help control these rising healthcare costs while keeping healthcare easily accessible. Thus, the birth of Direct Access.

Direct Access is a piece of legislation that was passed in 2002 by the State of Pennsylvania which makes it legal for a Physical Therapist to evaluate and treat a person without a prescription from a physician. This would potentially eliminate the burden of unnecessary visits to physicians, possibly controlling delays and denials of services provided by physical therapists. Delays in care result in higher costs, decreased functional outcomes, and frustration to patients. Direct Access to Physical Therapists improves the accessibility to rehabilitation services.

Physical therapy practice is regulated by all states, and as highly trained health care professionals, Physical Therapists (PT’s) have a proven track record of effectively treating millions of patients. PT’s are well qualified, both through formal education and clinical training, to evaluate a patient's condition, assess his or her needs and, if appropriate, safely and effectively treat the patient. PT’s are also well qualified to recognize when patients demonstrate conditions, signs and symptoms that should be evaluated by other health care professionals before therapy is instituted. PT’s recognize when it is appropriate to refer patients to these other health care professionals for consultation.

The professional training and expertise that characterize Physical Therapists has been recognized by 44 states plus the District of Columbia. As of August 2007, the states that currently allow Direct Access include: AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DC (added in 2007), DE, FL, GA, ID, IL, IA, KS (added in 2007), KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MN, MS, MT, NE, NV, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, WV, WI, and WY.

We here at Robinson Physical Therapy have the legal certifications and have the ability to treat you without this prescription from a physician. So, when you have those general aches and pains from working out in the yard or after a hard work out, think of us. Stop in and ask those questions that we know you all have. We would love the opportunity to evaluate you, treat you, and educate you. For more information, please call us at 412-787-8616.

For more information, please visit the American Physical Therapy Association website at www.apta.org.
Snow Shoveling Safety

I would like to begin by Wishing Everyone a Very Happy Holiday Season! During the year we all tend to be too busy to appreciate our friends and family. Each holiday season gives us an opportunity to step back and appreciate our friends and family!

The year 2008 will mark the 8th year that Robinson Physical Therapy & Health Center has been in business. We could not have been able to grow without our patients, our friends, family and referring physicians.

Over the years, we have become very close with many of our patients. These patients have become part of the Robinson Physical Therapy Family. We would like to thank all of you for choosing Robinson Physical Therapy! Your kindness and support are why we do what we do!!

Unfortunately, most health care has become very “de-personalized”. At Robinson Physical Therapy we like being a home town physical therapy provider. We believe that personalized care is very important. Every person is unique in their own way. Each diagnosis is individualized and requires one-on-one attention. Our success is a direct result of providing quality physical therapy. Our patients make our job much easier!

EVERYONE AT ROBINSON PHYSICAL THERAPY & HEALTH CENTER WOULD LIKE TO WISH YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES THE MOST WONDERFUL OF HOLIDAY SEASONS!!!

SNOW SHOVELING SAFETY

As I sit thinking about what to write about for this newsletter, I catch myself staring at the snow falling outside my window. I can’t help but think that we will soon be seeing the back strains and shoulder strains from patients that are trying to shovel themselves out of the snow! Winter is here! And so is shoveling the snow! Be safe when shoveling the snow and follow a few of the tips listed below.
Snow Shoveling Safety (Cont.)

A recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that people who rarely exercise are up to 30 times more likely to have a heart attack when they suddenly do something strenuous, such as snow shoveling. If you have a history of a heart condition, you probably should get someone else to shovel your snow for you!

Not all snow shoveling injuries are life threatening. Muscle strains and back strains are often caused by snow shoveling. There are many things that we can do to lessen our susceptibility to injury.

One thing that you can do is use an ergonomically correct shovel, such as the "Back Saver". It has a bent handle that allows for safer movement so you don't have to bend forward as much.

Also, make sure you use the proper shoveling technique. The most important thing you can do to save your back is to push the snow instead of lifting it. If you have to lift it, bend your knees and lift with your legs, not with your back. Avoid excessive twisting, bending or throwing snow over the shoulder because your spine could be injured. If you do push or lift the snow, keep the shovel close to your body. Reaching out with the shovel increases the lever arm and increases strain on the low back and shoulders.

Here are some other snow shoveling techniques from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons:

- Shovel early and often because newly fallen snow is lighter than heavily packed or partially melted snow.
- Warm up with stretches and light exercise, then start with light loads on the shovel to open up your arteries gradually.
- Shovel in the afternoon because many injuries occur in the morning when there is increased fluid pressure in your back's discs.
- Take frequent breaks. Stand up straight and walk around periodically to extend the lower back. And drink water because even though the air is cold, you could get overheated.
- Take a five-minute break for every 15 minutes of shoveling.
- Spray the shovel with non-stick cooking spray to prevent the snow from becoming heavily packed.
- Use a shovel that feels comfortable for your height and strength. Avoid a shovel that is too heavy or too long.
- Listen to your body and heed signals, such as shortness of breath or chest discomfort.

Remember that snow shoveling doesn't have to be backbreaking work. Go slow and be safe! Happy Holidays!

Worker's Compensation: Panel Providers

By Kim Leckie, RN, CCRN, Marketing Director

If you are injured in a work related accident, you would fall under the Pennsylvania State Worker’s Compensation Act. This act provides that all necessary and reasonable treatment for the work related injury be covered by the insurance carrier. Most insurance carriers and employers have a panel of physicians and other providers that the injured worker is required to go to for the first 90 days following the injury. Physicians are not the only names on a panel list. This list may also contain physical therapy centers, MRI and other diagnostic centers, and even hospitals. The provider list is typically available in the human resources or risk management department of your employer. There are exceptions to this rule, however.

One exception is in the event of a traumatic injury that requires immediate attention at the nearest hospital. If care was provided by a specialist at this facility, the injured worker may continue to follow up with this specialist until he is either returned to work or rendered to be at maximum medical improvement. Secondly, if the injured worker continues to experience problems after the 90 day period, he or she can make arrangements to be seen by a physician of their choice. Third, if the injured worker needs to see a specialist for treatment, and one is not listed on the panel, he or she can choose to seek treatment with a physician or provider of their choice.

It is important to keep in mind that if an injured worker chooses not to treat with a panel provider for the first 90 days of the injury, payment for the treatment rendered will most likely be denied by the insurance carrier.

Please report all work injuries to your employer immediately, and be sure to treat with the panel providers if there is a panel set up with your employer or insurance carrier.
As all of us are well aware the Christmas Season is upon us. That means, for the most of us, busier schedules, lots more running around, and all of those famous Christmas and New Years parties. With all of the extra running around and food consumption most of us tend to put working out and any exercise on the back burner of our minds. We all intend to resume our “normal” activities at the beginning of the year and even try to incorporate weight loss and getting into shape into some New Year’s resolution. The fact is, and studies show, that most Americans will gain 10 to 30 extra pounds over the months of November, December and January. The studies continue to show that those gaining this extra weight fail to loose it all by the ye.

We here at Robinson Physical Therapy recognize this problem and know how hard it is to stay committed to a healthy lifestyle during this time. In an effort to help combat this poor lifestyle cycle we are going to be offering a series of personal training and conditioning specials. The first of which we are offering to the public right now and will run for a limited time only.

This special consists of 4 personal training sessions that are conducted in a one-on-one fashion and a month’s gym membership that gives unlimited access to all the gym equipment for a flat rate of $75. That’s a value of normally $315. This type of program not only allows us to implement an exercise program designed specifically for your needs and goals, but also allows us to progress the exercises as you become better in shape and more comfortable with what we are doing. At the end of 4 weeks you will not only be on your way to being physically fit, but you will also have the tools to keep progressing and meeting your goals. At the end of the program you will also have the opportunity to renew this program special or sign on for other specials we will be having.

As always, any questions that you may have you can direct towards myself at 412-787-8616 or feel free to mail us the insert attached to the newsletter and I will be more than willing to contact you regarding any questions you may have. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!!!