

EDITORIAL

WHAT IS THE MOVEMENT SYSTEM AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Michael L. Voight, PT, DHSc, OCS, SCS, ATC, FAPTA¹Barbara J. Hoogenboom, PT, EdD, SCS, ATC²

In 2013, the APTA adopted an inspiring new vision, “Transforming society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience.” This new vision for our profession calls us all to action as physical therapists to transform society by using our skills, knowledge, and expertise related to the movement system in order to optimize movement, promote health and wellness, mitigate the progression of impairments, and prevent the development of (additional) disability.

Physical therapists (PTs) are too often identified by *what we do*, rather than by *what we know* as professionals. Although public recognition for physical therapist practice methods and outcomes is essential, understanding that PTs achieve these outcomes through clinical reasoning and practice that emanates from a distinct body of knowledge is crucial to our professional identity. Movement is a key to optimal living and quality of life for all people that extends beyond health to every person’s ability to participate in and contribute to society.

The guiding principle of the new vision is “identity,” and it can be summarized as “The physical therapy profession will define and promote the movement system as the foundation for optimizing movement to improve the health of society.”¹ Defining and promoting the *movement system* as the core construct that integrates the expanse of the PT professions’ body of knowledge is no small task! Although much of the scientific literature related to physical therapy addresses human movement in both broad and detailed configurations, the actual description of the anatomic structures and interrelated physiologic functions of movement have not yet been described as a *system*. Over the last three years, the APTA has led efforts not only to define the “movement system,” but also to lay the building blocks for the future. As currently defined, the “movement system” represents the collection of systems (cardiovascular, pulmonary, endocrine, integumentary, nervous, and musculoskeletal) that interact to move the body or its component parts. (Figure 1) By articulating the PT’s unique role in diagnosing and determining interventions for movement system disorders, the overarching goal is to advance the profession towards the reduction of unwarranted variations in practice and, in turn, to achieve consistent positive outcomes for specific diagnoses to enhance the value of the services we provide. By better characterizing physical therapists as movement system experts, we seek to solidify our professional identity within the medical community and society.

To further the definition of the movement system and begin to explore applications of this vision, The Movement System Summit was held December 8-10, 2016, in Alexandria, Virginia. The summit brought together 100 thought leaders in the physical therapy profession with a primary goal of developing a proposed action plan for integrating the movement system concepts into physical therapist practice, education, and research. Representatives from the SPTS and IJSPT were active participants in this summit; participating in collaboration among individuals, sections, and throughout areas of practice to help guide the future. There were many positive take away points from this summit and several of these are currently in the process of being incorporated into the inner workings of IJSPT (as well as other physical therapy related journals). The IJSPT editorial team

¹ Belmont University, Nashville, TN USA

² Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI USA

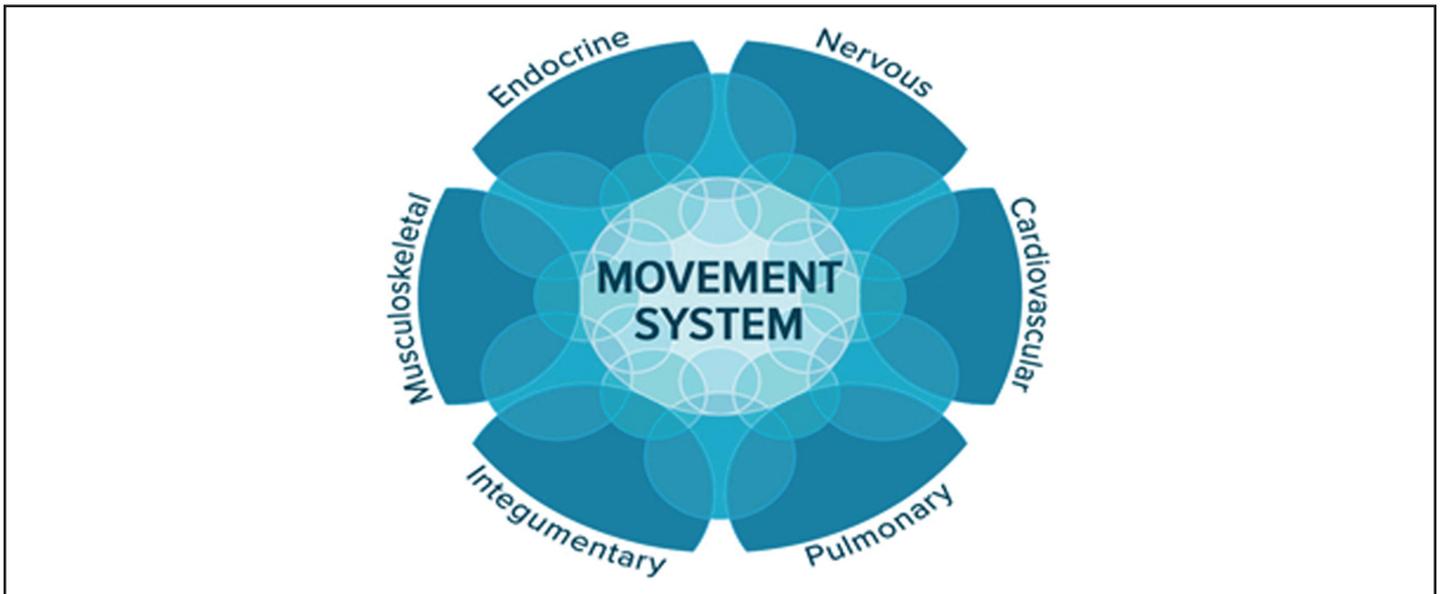


Figure 1. *Graphic representation of the Movement System, used with permission of the American Physical Therapy Association.*

is committed to the integration of movement system language, a focus on the movement system, and furthering the educational, research, and practice agendas of the APTA by supportive actions and efforts offered by the journal. An example of this is the development of new suggested key words that could be utilized to assist in establishing MESH headings for facets of the movement system. Additionally the journal will seek to be a catalyst to provide specific guidelines on ways that new and innovative research can advance clinicians' knowledge of the movement system. Look for more information in future issues as the movement system road map continues to unfold and your journal champions efforts to integrate the movement system into all aspects of physical therapist practice.

REFERENCE

1. American Physical Therapy Association. Physical Therapist Practice and The Human Movement System [White paper]. 2015. Alexandria, VA.