

From the desk of Lynn Erickson, COO - Advanced Therapy Solutions

Welcome to the *ATS Angle*, a publication with helpful resources and stories to support your facility's ongoing success. On behalf of the entire ATS team, we wish you a safe, healthy and happy holiday season.



ATS Year In Review 2020

By: Jim Palazzo, Chief Executive Officer, ATS and Transitions Group

By all accounts, 2020 has been a year unlike any other. We have seen a global pandemic effect just about every aspect of our work, family, and social lives. For months, we stayed inside, constantly followed the news, and for the most part, kept to ourselves. We experienced an election unlike any other, and a series of tumultuous political and social events that seemed to be an endless cycle of conflict and disagreement throughout the country. Along the way, we experienced pain, confusion, heartbreak, and fear of the future. But through it all, no matter how bad things became or have become, we experienced a new level of kinship, togetherness, and unity.

This unity and togetherness have undoubtedly surfaced as a reflection of our staff's dedication to each and every one of our therapy patients, and I am so proud of the way that we have been able to persevere through such difficult times.

At ATS, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged our leadership agility and clinical abilities. Yet, this year's events have also fostered innovation and collaboration at an astounding rate. ATS therapists worked side-by-side with our healthcare partners as we shifted to provide care in different ways in order to keep patients safe from COVID-19. Our teams implemented innovative ways to keep our patients moving along the path to recovery and meet their functional goals, including shifting from providing therapy in our open gym spaces to treatment at the bedside and in their rooms. ATS healthcare heroes quickly transitioned from occasionally wearing PPE to donning full PPE and a positive attitude every day brought some light and much-needed companionship right to patients' rooms.



This year has also underscored the important role that therapy plays as a member of the interdisciplinary team. Therapists, physicians, nurses, CNAs, the interdisciplinary team and other care providers worked together to combat the social isolation "hand" that the pandemic "dealt" while remaining focused on accomplishing our patients' functional goals, regaining as much independence as possible, and navigating care transitions.

With more than 15 years of providing comprehensive Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Therapy, ATS continues to expand its reach by providing inpatient, outpatient and contract rehab services in a variety of settings.

2020 has highlighted the value of aligning strong partnerships with skilled nursing facilities, assisted and independent living centers, home health companies, and outpatient clinics. We are grateful for the opportunity to support our valued care partners. Together, we have worked tirelessly to ensure the delivery of person-centered care in the midst of this devastating pandemic.

In 2021, there is still much work to be done. However, as this year comes to an end, my focus is drawn to one thing: family. This year has been difficult, but at the end of the day, family is what has gotten us through it all. Whether it's your mom, dad, brother, sister, or anyone in between - tell them you love them this year. Let them know how much they mean to you and how much you value them being a part of your life. As we begin to see a light at the end of the tunnel on COVID-19, family must continue to be at the heart of everything we do. In 2021, my goal is to make sure our teams will be able to spend more time with the people that matter most - to be there for the moments, big and small, and to cherish the time they are able to spend with their loved ones. Family is and always will be what drives us to succeed, gives us a reason to live, and helps us find a purpose on this path called life.

Thank you for your continued partnership. Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year. May you all stay safe, healthy, and happy this month and for the months to come.

ATS Team Reflections 2020

“I am most thankful for the ability to be able to help others in need and be part of a person’s rehab adventure.”

“I’m thankful for the support our admin/management and my colleagues have provided to get through these challenging times.”

“I am thankful for being a frontline member during the COVID-19 pandemic and being able to be a part of the fight.”



Let’s Beat the “Holiday Blues” Together!

The holiday season is upon us and this year especially for many of the patients we serve, depression and increased isolation can dampen this usual joyful time of year. For many, the 2020 holiday season is more blue than red, green and gold. Luckily, Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists can help address the issue of social isolation and support a holistic approach to treating adults experiencing depression or anxiety.

Not only does therapy help to restore and improve function, but it can also help improve patients’ moods. Research has uncovered a link between pain and depression, suggesting that more than one-third of individuals with chronic back or neck pain also exhibit signs of depression. Endorphins released by the brain during exercise have been shown to reduce pain and improve mood.

The National Institute on Aging (NIA) recently highlighted how cognitive health is an important component of performing everyday activities. A recent NIA-supported study from the University of Wisconsin led by Dr. Ozioma Okonkwo found that even moderate physical activity may increase metabolism in brain regions important for learning and memory.



Numerous studies indicate that exercise can improve mood and mindset, even helping to peel back layers of depression. In fact, research studies show that exercise increases the production of serotonin—the neurotransmitter that antidepressants target. Others believe that exercise helps people sleep better, which can have a protective effect on the brain.

On the psychological front, exercise may improve a depressed person’s outlook on life by boosting confidence through a return to normal activities.

ATS Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists are integral members of the Interdisciplinary Team to support both physical and psychosocial well-being.

Contact us to discuss how our team can support your patients throughout the holiday season and beyond.

Resources:

- [Moderate physical activity is associated with cerebral glucose metabolism in adults at risk for Alzheimer’s disease. *Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease*. 2017;58:1089–1097.](#)
- [Recovery from depressive symptoms over the course of physical therapy: a prospective cohort study of individuals with work-related orthopaedic injuries and symptoms of depression. *Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy*](#)
- [Moving to Beat Anxiety: Epidemiology and Therapeutic Issues with Physical Activity for Anxiety. *Current Psychiatry Reports*](#)
- [Effect of Structured Physical Activity on Prevention of Major Mobility Disability in Older Adults, *JAMA*](#)

Leadership Recommendations

- Ensure the plan of care incorporates skilled PT/OT/ST interventions and recommendations in conjunction with other therapeutic modalities to treat depression or anxiety disorders.
- Communication within the entire care team to address both short- and long-term goals is vital, especially when addressing the needs of patients experiencing depression and/or anxiety during the holidays and beyond.
- Provide patient/family resources to stay connected with their loved ones, especially during the holidays (e.g., scheduled phone calls or online visits, notes of encouragement, photos of family members, etc.).

Voice Your Support of Therapy Professionals

Earlier in December, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published the **final 2021 Physician Fee Schedule Rule**, cutting **9%** from Medicare payments beginning **January 1, 2021**, for therapy services. This payment cut will negatively impact providers, ATS and the patients we serve.

[Read the final rule](#) or download the [press release](#) from CMS.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

The fee schedule is final for 2021, but legislation in Congress could stop the implementation of this devastating 9% cut. We encourage our colleagues to ask Congress to support H.R. 8702. [The Holding Providers Harmless From Medicare Cuts During COVID-19 Act of 2020 \(H.R. 8702/S. 5007\)](#) is bipartisan legislation to provide critical relief to providers who are scheduled to receive Medicare payment cuts next year. H.R. 8702/S. 5007 would ensure that payments to these providers are not cut and kept stable for the next two years.

Please [send a message](#) to your lawmakers asking them for their support. It will take less than five minutes to advocate your support.

- **Request passing legislation that waives budget neutrality for at least 2 years**, delaying the reduction in reimbursement until a better option is found.
- **Share** with your colleagues so we can bring more attention to the potentially damaging effects of this cut.
- **Click below** to access a pre-written letter to Congress where you can add your own message or send as-is.

[Send A Message to Congress](#)



Advanced Therapy Solutions exists to inspire, encourage, and motivate patients to excellence in therapy. Every patient is unique to us. Therefore, each one is treated with care, support, and dignity as they strive to achieve their daily therapy goals. We pride ourselves on treating others as they want to be treated, for this is our ultimate measure of the quality of care in every respect.

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