

Sunday, May 18, 2008

[Is the Nintendo Wii Skilled Physical Therapy?](#)

You can go buy the [Nintendo Wii Gaming System](#) from [Circuit City](#) for \$249.99.

I haven't done this but I could buy the Nintendo Wii Gaming System and use it in [my physical therapy clinic](#) billing patients for Therapeutic Activities (97530) or Therapeutic Exercise (97110) all day long.

You could also buy the Wii Fit Balance Board from [Circuit City](#) for \$89.99 and put that in your physical therapy clinic, too.

Apparently, many physical and occupational clinics have done just that.

["Herrin Hospital](#) in southern Illinois, about 100 miles southeast of St. Louis, bought a Wii system for rehab patients late last year.

At Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the (Wii) therapy is well-suited to patients injured during combat in Iraq, [said Lt. Col. Stephanie Daugherty](#), Walter Reed's chief of occupational therapy."

I live in a [resort community on the west coast of Florida](#) and many of my retired patients would love to come to me for rehabilitation focused around their tennis or golf lifestyles.

Some physical therapists have declared that [Wii is inappropriate in the physical therapy clinic](#),. Larry Benz is a physical therapist with a large following who has posted on multiple occasions at [MyPhysicalTherapySpace.com](#) about his displeasure with the Wii.

My position on the Wii (and technology in physical therapy in general) is this: Does it help the patient?

If technology (including the Wii) is good for the patient then we should consider its use.

I have not ready Larry Benz' every post so maybe he has already brought this next point up.

Is Wii skilled therapy?

Every third-party payer requires physical therapy be skilled physical therapy. Most insurance contracts have a 'boilerplate' section that mentions this.

Only Medicare has police powers so we usually just talk about Medicare requiring evidence of skilled therapy in the daily Treatment Encounter Notes.

[Transmittal 88](#) has a specific definition of skilled therapy, as follows:

"Services must not only be provided by the qualified professional or qualified personnel, but they must require, for example, the expertise, knowledge, clinical judgment, decision making and abilities of a therapist that assistants, qualified personnel, caretakers or the patient cannot provide independently. A clinician may not merely supervise, but must apply the skills of a therapist by actively participating in the treatment of the patient during each Progress Report Period." (page 25)

This next section is repetitive but bears on the Wii issue...

"Services provided by aides, even if under the supervision of a therapist, are not therapy services and are not covered by Medicare. Although an aide may help the therapist by providing unskilled services, those services that are unskilled are not covered by Medicare and shall be denied as not reasonable and necessary if they are billed as therapy services." (page 42)

What is missing from the Wii debate is the diagnosis.

What is the specific impairment, addressed by the Wii, that is addressed that when treated, will significantly improve patient function?

Also from [Transmittal 88](#)...

"A diagnosis (where allowed by state and local law) and description of the specific problem(s) to be evaluated and/or treated. The diagnosis should be specific and as relevant to the problem to be treated as possible. In many cases, both a medical diagnosis (obtained from a physician/NPP) and an impairment based treatment diagnosis related to treatment are relevant."(page 27)

To paraphrase Hippocrates, "First, a physical therapy diagnosis".

Posted by Tim Richardson, PT at [8:19 PM](#)  

Labels: [physical therapy continuing education](#), [physical therapy diagnosis](#), [physical therapy medicare compliance](#), [skilled physical therapy](#)

<http://physicaltherapydiagnosis.blogspot.com/2008/05/is-nintendo-wii-skilled-physical.html> 03.11.2009