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February 19, 2009

To Whom it May Concern:

**RE: Interpretation of Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy (FCCPT) Final Reports**

It has come to our attention that there seems to be confusion over the language used by the FCCPT in their final report on substantial equivalency of foreign-educated physical therapists (PT). This letter is written to clarify this misunderstanding, and to define the meaning of the terms used by the FCCPT.

The FCCPT has been authorized by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to issue Certifications for Healthcare Workers for physical therapists. As part of this process, FCCPT must verify that the education of the applicant meets current US standards of education in physical therapy.

The misunderstanding seems to stem from applying the US Department of Labor standards for US-trained physical therapists' education to a foreign-trained physical therapist's education. The Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) 2009-09 edition states that the minimum requirements for practicing as a PT in the US is a master's degree or higher from an accredited physical therapy program (and a state license). This is correct.

However, foreign-educated PTs do not attend US-accredited physical therapy programs. FCCPT instead determines the "substantial equivalency" of a foreign-educated physical therapist's education to a US education and defines it as having completed an education that is equivalent to the current first professional degree in physical therapy in the United States. This, of course, is from a US-accredited physical therapy program.

The Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) is the accreditation agency that sets the standards for PT education in the US. In 2001, CAPTE discontinued the accreditation of baccalaureate degree programs. Since that time, accredited programs have converted to post-baccalaureate programs, with degrees that include Masters of Physical Therapy (MPT), Masters of Science in Physical Therapy (MSPT) or Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT). Thus, the current first professional degree is by definition at least a master's degree or higher.

Because the entry level or first professional degree can be any of these three options for degree title, the FCCPT chose the language of substantial equivalency to the first professional degree. The review completed by the FCCPT is based upon required minimum curriculum content as well as length of study. The tool used for this review was developed by the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy and is the only tool which has been validated for content against the CAPTE evaluative criteria.

When the FCCPT issues the Type I Comprehensive Credentials Review Certificate and reports that a candidate has achieved substantial equivalency to the first professional degree in PT in the United States, this means that it is equivalent to at least a master's degree in PT, awarded at a CAPTE-accredited US institution.

If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact me at [slindeblad@fccpt.org](mailto:slindeblad@fccpt.org) or by phone at (703) 299-3100, ext. 401.

Sincerely,

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Managing Director of Credentialing Services.

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