

Northwestern Medicine

Acute Care Physical Therapy Residency

Information Packet

2025 – 2026 Admission Cycle

The Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Physical Therapy Residency is a collaborative program of Northwestern Memorial Hospital and the Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

Our residency program prepares residents to care for medically complex acute care patients. The program includes clinical care in a variety of service lines, educational opportunities and one-on-one mentorship with a Northwestern Medicine faculty member.

The residency is a 12-month program for licensed physical therapists interested in specializing in acute care practice at the No. 4 (tie) physical therapy school in the nation, per *U.S. News & World Report*, 2024.

Key dates for 2025 to 2026 admission cycle

These dates may change:

- Residency application submission deadline: February 2, 2025
- Anticipated candidate interviews: February 2025
- Notification of accepted candidates: Two to three weeks from interview date
- Anticipated residency starting date: August 20, 2025

For more information about the residency, please contact:

Elizabeth Moore, PT, DPT

Board-Certified Clinical Specialist in Oncologic Physical Therapy

Director, Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Residency

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The medical campus

Located in the heart of downtown Chicago, our medical campus is a short walk from beautiful Lake Michigan. It is near a wide offering of cultural, sporting and entertainment opportunities, and easily accessible via public transit. We share the neighborhood with two independent specialty hospitals, Shirley Ryan Ability Lab and Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago.

Northwestern Memorial Hospital

Anchoring our medical campus is Northwestern Memorial Hospital, an 894-bed academic medical center with physicians, surgeons and caregivers representing nearly every medical specialty. The hospital enjoys a teaching and service partnership with Feinberg School of Medicine. Northwestern Memorial Hospital has also received Magnet® recognition, the gold-standard for nursing excellence, from the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences

Ours is the oldest physical therapy school in the U.S. and has a global reputation for:

- Excellence in training the next generation of leaders in physical therapy practice and research through professional and post-professional education programs
- Training new researchers in the field of movement and rehabilitation science
- Developing and implementing of technology-supported therapeutic interventions
- Advances in rehabilitation science, including quantifying movement disorders and care outcomes

We also offer a unique dual degree DPT-PhD program with Northwestern University McCormick School of Engineering, and a PhD degree in Movement and Rehabilitation Science offered through the Northwestern University interdepartmental neuroscience doctoral program.

Our accreditation status

Physical therapy residencies and fellowships are accredited by the American Board of Physical Therapy Residency and Fellowship Education (ABPTRFE), an APTA affiliate. **The Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Residency was accredited through ABPTRFE in 2021.** The American Board of Physical Therapy Specialty currently does not have a board certification in acute care practice.

Our mission

Our mission is to develop physical therapists with highly specialized skills in the rehabilitation of patients with medically complex acute care needs. To improve the health of local communities, our residents and faculty foster a culture of high-quality education and research, encouraging excellence of practice, science-based clinical reasoning, and lifelong learning.

Educational content

Our program will cover all didactic content required by ABPTRFE. We strive to prepare residents for the anticipated ABPTS acute care board-certification exam when it becomes available.

Our curriculum highlights include:

- Case reports: navigating mobility in conjunction with external circulatory support
- Problem-based learning: line and ventilator management, activity modification based on patient tolerance in the medical ICU; complex trauma cases
- Specialty observations with interdisciplinary team members
- Filling physical therapist role in inpatient wound care, preventing pressure injuries and observing wound care nurses
- Patient demonstration for neuro-specific trials: ITB and NPH; patient simulation and use of JFK Coma Recovery Scale
- Mentor presentations: Cancer-related fatigue; CAR T cell and physical therapy; assessment of acute dizziness in the emergency department
- Research/quality improvement project: You must complete an acute care-focused research or quality improvement project in conjunction with or guided by residency faculty or researchers.

Educational structure

- Educational hours: Over 350 hours, including interdisciplinary experiences, research/quality improvement work and teaching in the Northwestern University DPT program
- Periodic didactic sessions at PTHMS with one or more members of the PTHMS faculty that will be a combination of lecture, lab, online modules and discussions
- Grand rounds opportunities in various areas, including orthopaedics, ethics, patient safety and stroke care.
- Journal clubs and departmental in-services
- Online self-guided CEUs via MedBridge for various acute care topics selected by specialty mentors
- Formal CEU coursework (virtual/in-person formats)

Resident teaching opportunities

As a resident, you will participate as a lab assistant and lead small group discussions in the DPT student program at Northwestern University. Curriculum participation includes:

- Examination and Evaluation I
- Foundations of Physical Therapy I
- Clinical Management of Patients with Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Dysfunction

You will also receive interdisciplinary education with medical students, residents, nurses and others at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

Specialty experiences

During your residency, you may have the opportunity to:

- Participate in specialty outpatient clinics including those for ALS, muscular dystrophy, liver transplant, cystic fibrosis and bariatric care.
- Observe surgeries.

Residency application process

Because our acute care residency is an accredited program through ABPTRFE, you must apply through the [RF-PTCAS national common residency application system online](#).

To be eligible for the residency, you must provide:

- Degree, licensure: Current licensure in good standing or eligibility for licensure as a physical therapist in Illinois (You must have active licensure in Illinois before the program start date)
- Proof of certification/membership:
 - Current Basic Cardiac Lift Support certification
 - Proof of current APTA membership
- Academic/professional history: Transcripts from an accredited physical therapy program and current curriculum vitae (CV) or resume
- Three letters of recommendation, including those from **at least two** of the following:
 - Current or former physical therapist supervisor (or CI, if a recent graduate with less than six months experience)
 - Instructor or faculty member from a CAPTE-accredited physical therapy program, or a mentor from an accredited residency program
 - A professional with whom you worked with in the past year in clinical care or research
- Additional requirements:
 - Personal statement that reflects your desire to complete an acute care residency in our program, consider including:
 - Prior clinical and educational experience
 - Personal goals and objectives for the acute care residency
 - Self-assessment of acute care clinical strengths and areas for development
 - Your short- and long-term goals after completing acute care residency
 - Three professional references
 - Meets criteria for employment at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and able to start orientation as a Northwestern Medicine employee
 - Excellent written and verbal communication skills
 - Demonstrates characteristics of a team player with high standards of professional behavior

Residency slots are limited. Therefore, admission to the residency is a competitive process. The Residency Board is committed to admitting qualified candidates who are deemed best prepared to contribute to accomplishing the residency's mission and goals.

Residency interview

The Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Residency Board reviews applications and selects candidates to proceed to the interview phase. If you are selected for an interview, prepare for topics such as:

- Why you want to complete an acute care residency
- Your application documents
- Your clinical practice, patient cases and professional issues
- Your physical therapy research
- Demonstrating patient interactions and/or intervention plans

The Residency Board is committed to selecting applicants who, based on their past educational, clinical and personal experience and achievements, demonstrate excellent prospects for:

- Successfully completing all residency requirements
- Professional leadership
- Diligently using their time and talent to support our residency mission and goals

Admission into the residency is subject to the sole discretion of the Residency Board and residency director.

Accepted resident process

If you are selected, the residency director will send you a Letter of Agreement into the Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Residency Program. Northwestern Medicine Human Resources will send you an offer letter outlining the employee-onboarding requirements.

An accepted candidates confirm their intent to join the residency by:

- Sending a \$200 non-refundable deposit check to the residency director
- Following all residency policies, procedures and rules
- Accepting the residency financial agreement regarding salary and benefits
- Making arrangements with Northwestern Medicine Human Resources to complete any remaining employment requirements
- Accepting terms of employment agreement/contract

If at any time, for any reason, Northwestern Medicine deems a candidate ineligible for employment, their participation in the residency will be automatically denied or terminated.

Resident handbook

More detailed information on residency policies, including remediation, grievance and termination, is provided in the Resident Handbook. We will provide this handbook to each candidate who receives an offer and joins the residency.

Residency Logistics

Salary

Residents will be salaried employees of Northwestern Medicine. For more details, see the Northwestern Medicine job description for Acute Care Physical Therapy Resident/Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Residency - Residency Handbook.

Resident salaries are 80% of a new graduate entry level physical therapist salary at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. We will include more details about your salary and benefits in an employment offer letter if you are selected.

Schedule

Residents' schedules includes about 32 clinical hours a week, plus 10 to 15 hours for the didactic program, research and observations. Schedules may change during your residency to maximize clinical, didactic and experimental opportunities.

Due to the intensive nature of this 12-month residency training, we strongly discourage outside employment during your residency.

Tuition

There is no tuition for our residency program. However, a one-time non-refundable \$200 check is required as part of a Letter of Agreement to enter the residency program. Because there is no tuition, we do not offer financial aid or stipends.

As a Northwestern Medicine employee, residents will be allotted \$1,000 to use for continuing education course registration. It may not be used for travel and/or lodging costs. Residents must follow the procedures to apply for and use these funds. If registration fees exceed the allocated \$1,000 budget, you are responsible for the remaining course registration cost.

Employment period

Employment as a resident is limited to the time approved for completing the residency. After you complete the residency and take any accrued vacation and paid time off, your employment at Northwestern Memorial Hospital will end unless you have applied and been accepted for an open position at the hospital.

If you were an employee at Northwestern Memorial Hospital before you were admitted into the residency, you are not guaranteed a return to your prior position. You must apply for an open position before or after completing the residency. Northwestern Memorial Hospital will make every effort to place residency graduates who were employed at the hospital pre-residency.