

## Executive Summary: Availability of Ethics Remediation and Effective Delivery Mechanisms for Physical Therapy Licensing Boards

The dynamic field of bioethics plays a critical role in guiding ethical decision-making and conduct in physical therapy. As healthcare advances, physical therapists (PTs) and physical therapist assistants (PTAs) face evolving ethical challenges requiring adherence to core principles such as beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, and justice. Recognizing these challenges, the profession emphasizes ethics education, assessment, and remediation.

### Key Ethical Issues in Physical Therapy Practice

1. **Unique Patient Relationships:** Prolonged one-on-one interactions can lead to ethical dilemmas, including boundary violations or biased decision-making.
2. **Diverse Ethical Challenges:** Cases include power imbalances, inappropriate patient relationships, and conflicts of interest unique to the profession.

### Current Challenges in Ethics Remediation

- **Scarcity of PT-Specific Resources:** Compared to medicine and nursing, PT lacks tailored materials for addressing ethical violations and remediation.
- **Root Cause Identification:** Boards struggle to assess underlying issues behind ethical breaches, which limits effective remediation.
- **Inadequate Sanctions:** Disciplinary measures like fines often fail to foster behavioral change or address the causes of misconduct.
- **Professional Development Needs:** Ethical decision-making skills require a developmental continuum, tailored to the practitioner's stage of career.

### Strategies for Improving Ethical Practice

- **Tailored Educational Approaches:** Combining classroom instruction with experiential learning methods like case studies, role-playing, and one-on-one counseling.
- **Leveraging Assessment Tools:** Instruments such as the RIPS model and James Rest's four-component framework support structured decision-making in ethical dilemmas.
- **Broader Resource Utilization:** Collaboration with universities, professional organizations, and interdisciplinary experts to expand ethics education options.

### Frameworks for Ethical Decision-Making

1. **Rest's Four-Stage Model:**
  - Recognize the ethical issue.
  - Understand the moral implications.
  - Decide on a course of action.



- Execute the response.
- 2. **RIPS Model:** Offers a practical method to evaluate ethical challenges across individual, organizational, and societal realms, prioritizing actionable solutions.

### Gaps in Education and Remediation

Research reveals a need for:

- Enhanced ethics integration into PT curricula and clinical training.
- Baseline ethics assessments to identify potential issues pre-licensure.
- Feedback mechanisms between licensing boards and educational institutions to improve ethics training.

### Recommendations for Licensing Boards

1. **Expand Resource Access:** Utilize materials from adjacent fields like nursing and medicine, and develop new PT-specific tools.
2. **Invest in Ethics Training:** Focus on both pre-licensure education and continuous professional development.
3. **Promote Collaborative Approaches:** Engage stakeholders to foster non-punitive, education-centered ethics remediation programs like PreP4 Patient Safety.

This summary underscores the profession's responsibility to adapt ethics education and remediation strategies to evolving challenges. By prioritizing tailored approaches and ongoing assessment, physical therapy can strengthen public trust and professional accountability.

