

University of Chicago Medicine

Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Overview

Mission of the Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Program

The mission of the University of Chicago Medicine Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Program is to cultivate advanced clinical specialists who deliver exceptional, evidence-based care to individuals with orthopaedic conditions. Through an integrated experience that combines didactic education, mentored clinical practice, research engagement, and independent patient management, the program prepares physical therapists to advance orthopaedic practice and pursue board certification as clinical specialists.

The program emphasizes the development of advanced clinical reasoning, psychomotor proficiency, and reflective practice to foster excellence in patient outcomes. Graduates will serve as leaders, educators, and advocates—enhancing the practice of orthopaedic physical therapy and contributing to the University of Chicago Medicine’s mission of advancing health, rehabilitation, and wellness within our community.

Goals of the Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Program at UChicago Medicine

The goals of the University of Chicago Medicine Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Program are to provide a comprehensive, post-professional educational experience that enables physical therapists to:

1. Integrate current best evidence to accurately evaluate, diagnose, and manage individuals with orthopaedic conditions across the continuum of care.
2. Apply advanced clinical reasoning and skilled interventions to optimize patient outcomes throughout a full episode of orthopaedic physical therapy care.
3. Demonstrate effective communication and collaboration within an interdisciplinary healthcare team and with patients, families, and caregivers to support participation and quality of life.
4. Promote health, wellness, and injury prevention by developing and delivering community-based programs and educational initiatives related to movement, performance, and rehabilitation.
5. Engage in scholarly and professional activities that contribute to the growth of orthopaedic physical therapy, including research, innovation, teaching, and professional presentation.
6. Exemplify professionalism and lifelong learning through reflective practice, mentorship, and leadership within the physical therapy and medical communities.

Program Structure and Curriculum Hours

The University of Chicago Medicine Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency is a full-time, 12-month post-professional educational program designed to advance clinical competence in

orthopaedic physical therapy in accordance with the *Description of Residency Practice (DRP)*. The curriculum integrates didactic education, mentored clinical practice, independent patient management, and scholarly activity to promote excellence in patient outcomes, reflective practice, and lifelong learning.

The program meets or exceeds all ABPTRFE requirements, including a minimum of 1,800 total program hours, consisting of at least 300 educational hours, 1,500 patient-care clinic hours, and 150 hours of one-on-one mentoring, with a minimum of 100 of those mentoring hours completed in person.

The educational component consists of over 300 hours and is divided as follows:

- **Didactic education:** Structured instruction includes nine orthopaedic physical therapy modules covering the major joint regions of the body, along with specialty sessions in Clinical Reasoning, Research, Radiology, Rheumatology, Endocrinology, Nutrition, Pain Science, Pharmacology, and the Psychology of Pain. The didactic curriculum emphasizes anatomy, differential diagnosis, advanced clinical reasoning, and evidence-based practice, providing residents with a strong foundation for integrating research and clinical expertise into orthopaedic patient care.
- **Clinical investigations and scholarly activities:** Activities include research engagement, journal clubs, case conferences, functional outcome tracking, quality-improvement projects, case reviews, participation in peer review, and grand-round presentations.
- **Specialty practice observation:** Observation of surgical procedures, interdisciplinary rounds, and specialty clinics within orthopaedics, sports medicine, and related fields.

The **mentored clinical practice** includes a minimum of 150 hours, which are embedded within patient-care clinic time. Residents receive direct 1:1 mentoring with ABPTS-certified or residency/fellowship-trained clinicians. Mentoring experiences are structured to advance the resident's clinical reasoning, psychomotor proficiency, and evidence-based decision-making.

The **independent clinical practice** component accounts for approximately 1,900 hours of patient-care clinic time. During this portion of the program, the resident functions as the primary provider for orthopaedic patient populations under indirect supervision, with progressive autonomy and increasing complexity throughout the year.

Schedule Overview

The residency is a 12-month program. A three-week orientation period focuses on foundational education and introductory patient care. Two weeks of non-educational holiday time are scheduled during the year, during which residents provide patient care but no didactic education occurs.

On average, residents engage in approximately 45 to 55 hours of total program activity each week, which includes about 36 hours of patient care and 14 hours dedicated to education and

mentoring. Additional independent study time is expected to support ongoing professional development.

Residency activities occur primarily Monday through Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Schedules are coordinated by the Residency Program Director and the Outpatient Therapy Supervisor to balance patient care, mentoring, and didactic learning. There is no weekend coverage requirement.

Compensation and Continuing Education Support

Residents in the University of Chicago Medicine Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Program are full-time employees of the University of Chicago Medical Center. The residency position is structured as a 0.9 full-time equivalent (FTE) role, reflecting the clinical expectations of a new graduate clinician while allowing protected time for educational and mentoring activities. The annual salary for the residency position is established in accordance with institutional standards and reflects both the cost of maintaining the program and the resident's educational status within the organization.

There are no additional tuition or program fees required for participation in the residency.

As employees, residents are eligible for the standard UCMC benefits package, including health insurance, paid time off, and access to employee wellness resources.

To support professional growth and lifelong learning, the University of Chicago Medicine provides each resident with \$4,000 in tuition or continuing education assistance. This allocation becomes available after successful completion of the program's probationary period and may be applied toward approved continuing-education courses, conferences, or other learning opportunities that complement the residency curriculum.

The \$4,000 continuing-education benefit cannot be used for travel, lodging, meals, or transportation expenses associated with attendance at educational events. Beyond this benefit, no additional funds are allocated for external tuition reimbursement, travel or parking fees for outside observations, licensure fees, or professional organization dues.

Paid Time Off (PTO) and Holidays

Physical Therapy Residents are full-time employees of the University of Chicago Medical Center and are eligible for paid time off in accordance with institutional policy. Residents are allotted 10 days of paid time off (PTO) during the 12-month program, which includes both vacation and sick days, in addition to seven paid organizational holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

Because of the structured nature of the residency and the volume of didactic and mentoring activities, extended absences are difficult to accommodate. The following expectations apply:

- **Scheduling:** PTO requests must be approved in advance by both the Residency Program Director and the Outpatient Therapy Supervisor.
- **Use:** PTO, which includes sick days, must be taken within the duration of the residency year and cannot be carried over or deferred.
- **Extended Leave:** Any absence beyond the allotted 10 PTO days requires approval by the Residency Program Director and the Outpatient Therapy Supervisor and may extend the resident's program completion date.

Professional Liability Insurance

As an employee of the University of Chicago Medical Center, each resident is covered under the organization's professional liability insurance policy. This institutional coverage applies only to professional activities and patient-care responsibilities that are part of the residency program.

Residents are encouraged to maintain personal professional liability insurance throughout the duration of the residency. This additional coverage provides supplemental protection for any activities outside the scope of the residency or institutional employment.

How to Apply

The University of Chicago Medicine Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Program participates in the centralized application process through the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA).

Applicants must submit all required materials through the Residency and Fellowship Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (RF-PTCAS) at:

<https://rfptcas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>

Application Deadline

All application materials must be submitted through RF-PTCAS no later than **December 14, 2025**.

Interview Process

Selected applicants will be invited to participate in a two-phase interview process:

- Phone Interview (by invitation): December 15–26, 2025
- On-Site Interviews: January 13 and January 20, 2026, at the University of Chicago Medicine Hyde Park Campus

The interview process includes behavioral and clinical questions, discussion of patient scenarios, and opportunities to demonstrate clinical reasoning and communication skills. Applicants may also be asked to share preliminary research or quality-improvement interests as part of the interview discussion.



Admission Notification

Final admission decisions are made following completion of all interviews. Applicants will be notified of their admission status through the contact information provided in their RF-PTCAS application.

Contact Information

For questions or additional information, please contact:

Roy Horton, PT, DPT

Program Coordinator for Outpatient Physical Therapy Professional Development
Program Director, Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Program
Site Clinical Coordinator of Education, Outpatient Therapy Services
Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapists
Board-Certified Orthopaedic Clinical Specialist

The University of Chicago Medicine

Hyde Park Campus: 860 E. 59th St., Chicago, IL 60637
Beverly Campus: 2304 W. 95th St., Chicago, IL 60643
Office: (773) 702-6891
Fax: (773) 795-2555

Program Outcomes

Since the program's inception in **January 2011**, the University of Chicago Medicine Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency has prepared graduates to become advanced clinical specialists and leaders in orthopaedic physical therapy practice, education, and research.

- **Number of Graduates:** 38
- **Orthopaedic Clinical Specialist (OCS) Examination Pass Rate:** 97% among graduates who have taken the examination
- **Program Accreditation:** Accredited through September 2026

Graduate Achievements

Graduates of the program have gone on to assume diverse leadership, clinical, and academic roles, including:

- Program Directors and Associate Program Directors in accredited orthopaedic residency and fellowship programs nationwide
- Completion of advanced post-professional training, including Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapy Fellowships and Sports Physical Therapy Residencies
- Faculty and adjunct faculty appointments at institutions including Temple University, Marquette University, University of Wisconsin, University of Northwestern, Ohio

University, University of Southern Indiana, Maryville University, and Midwestern University

- Engagement in advanced research and scholarship, including enrollment in or completion of PhD programs and contributions to peer-reviewed publications
- Clinical specialists providing care for professional athletes, including roles with Major League Baseball organizations such as the New York Mets and Chicago Cubs

Faculty Members

The University of Chicago Medicine Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency Program is supported by a dedicated and highly qualified faculty committed to advancing orthopaedic clinical practice, mentoring, and professional development.

The program currently includes 12 core faculty members, representing diverse areas of expertise within orthopaedic physical therapy and related specialties. Of these:

- 11 faculty members are board-certified Orthopaedic Clinical Specialists (OCS) through the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS).
- 1 faculty member is a board-certified Women's Health Clinical Specialist (WCS) through ABPTS.
- 6 faculty members are Fellows of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapists (FAAOMPT)

Collectively, the faculty bring extensive experience in clinical reasoning, manual therapy, movement science, and mentorship. Many serve as lecturers, clinical instructors, and continuing-education presenters across regional and national professional platforms. Faculty members are actively engaged in research, publication, and interprofessional collaboration, ensuring residents benefit from mentorship grounded in both clinical expertise and scholarly excellence.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to have an Illinois physical therapy license before starting the program?

Yes. Residents must either hold an active Illinois physical therapy license or provide proof that they are eligible and in the process of obtaining licensure before the program start date. Proof of licensure is required prior to participating in patient care.

When does the residency program begin?

The Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency at the University of Chicago Medicine begins in August.

Where will I work during the residency year?

Residents complete their clinical practice at the Hyde Park Campus of the University of Chicago Medicine. Specialty observation experiences may occur at affiliated UCM sites, which provide exposure to interdisciplinary and subspecialty areas of orthopaedic care.

How is mentoring structured?

Residents receive a minimum of 150 hours of one-on-one mentoring, fully integrated within their clinical schedule. A minimum of four hours of scheduled mentoring per week is provided, during which residents and mentors collaboratively manage live patient care. Mentoring sessions include both new patient evaluations and return treatment sessions, ensuring consistent feedback and skill progression across various case types.

Residents typically work with four mentors at a time and experience three rotations of mentors throughout the residency year. This structure provides exposure to a range of clinical reasoning styles, treatment approaches, and mentorship perspectives, promoting growth and adaptability across the continuum of orthopaedic physical therapy practice.

Are there opportunities for teaching or education involvement?

While there is no formal academic teaching component associated with the residency, residents participate in an interdisciplinary educational session with the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. Residents also provide educational observation experiences for medical students and Doctor of Physical Therapy students. Additionally, periodic opportunities to deliver in-service or educational sessions within the organization occur throughout the year.

What is the research or scholarly expectations?

Residents have the option to complete either a case study or a Traffic Light Project (an evidence synthesis initiative). Case studies are encouraged to be submitted for poster presentation at the APTA Combined Sections Meeting (CSM). The scholarly process is designed to enhance evidence-based practice skills and professional dissemination of knowledge.

Am I guaranteed employment at UCM after the residency?

Employment after program completion is not guaranteed; however, many graduates are retained within the University of Chicago Medicine system. Graduates who demonstrate excellence in

clinical reasoning, professionalism, and patient care are often strong candidates for available positions.

Does the program help prepare for the Orthopaedic Clinical Specialist (OCS) exam?

Yes. The curriculum is designed to align with the ABPTS Orthopaedic Description of Specialty Practice (DSP), and residents receive guided mentorship and structured learning activities to prepare for the OCS examination.

How does the program support diversity and inclusion?

The University of Chicago Medicine is committed to equitable admissions practices and fostering an inclusive learning environment. The residency promotes cultural humility, health equity, and inclusive care practices through ongoing education, mentorship, and interprofessional engagement.