

Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Physical Therapy Residency

Information Packet

2026-2027 Admission Cycle

Residency Description

The Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Physical Therapy Residency is a collaborative program of Northwestern Memorial Hospital and the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences (NUPTHMS). Our residency program prepares residents to care for medically complex acute care patients, and 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 designed for licensed physical therapists interested in specialization in acute care practice at a nationally ranked academic medical center per U.S. News and World Report, and physical therapy school ranked 4th among U.S. physical therapy programs.

Chicago

The Medical Campus

Located in the Near North neighborhood of Streeterville, just east of Chicago's Magnificent Mile, Northwestern Memorial Hospital is just a short walk from beautiful Lake Michigan with its lakefront path stretching 27-miles along the city. Northwestern Memorial Hospital sits within the Northwestern medical campus and is within close proximity to a plethora of cultural, sporting and entertainment opportunities. Due to its central location NMH is easily accessible via public transit including the CTA and Metra.

The medical campus includes several institutions collectively known as Northwestern Medicine, plus two independent specialty hospitals, Shirley Ryan Ability Lab (formerly Rehab Institute of Chicago), and Lurie Children's Hospital (formerly Children's Memorial Hospital).

Northwestern Medicine

The institutions making up the Northwestern Medicine health system are the NU Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH), and Northwestern Medical Group (NMG). NMG is a multi-specialty practice of approximately 1000 physicians wholly owned by Northwestern Memorial Health Care, the holding company for NMH. NMH was recently recognized as the top hospital in Illinois and is on the Best Hospital Honor Roll from U.S. News and World Report.

Northwestern Memorial Hospital

Northwestern Memorial Hospital is an 894-bed academic medical center in the heart of downtown Chicago with physicians, surgeons and caregivers representing nearly every medical specialty. The hospital is nationally ranked in 11 adult specialties. Northwestern Memorial Hospital is recognized for providing exemplary patient care and innovative advancements in a variety of clinical areas including cardiology, heart and vascular surgery, diabetes and endocrinology, gastroenterology and GI surgery, geriatrics, neurology and neurosurgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pulmonology and lung surgery, urology, cancer, ear, nose and throat, and orthopedics. Northwestern Memorial Hospital enjoys a teaching and service partnership with Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, an integration that provides patients access to leading-edge clinical trials and fosters an environment of world-class patient care, academic inquiry and innovative research. 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

Consistently ranked among the top 10 U.S. physical therapy schools by U.S. News and World Report, PTHMS is the oldest physical therapy school in the U.S. and has garnered 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 (MRS).
- Development and implementation of technology-supported therapeutic interventions.
- Advances in rehabilitation science including the quantification of movement disorders and clinical outcomes.

Besides its renowned physical therapy school, NUPTHMS is increasingly recognized for its unique dual-degree DPT-PhD program in conjunction with the McCormick School of Engineering, and a PhD degree in Neuroscience, Movement and Rehabilitation Science offered through the Northwestern University Interdepartmental Neuroscience PhD program (NUIN) and a dual-degree DPT-MPH program in conjunction with The Graduate School.

Residency 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.

Residency Mission

The mission of the Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Physical Therapy Residency is to develop physical therapists with highly specialized skills in the rehabilitation of the medically complex acute care patient. Residents and faculty will seek to improve the health of our local community and the knowledge of our

Residency Goals

The NM Acute Care residency program will:

- Foster the development of residents who exemplify NM values of “Patients First, Excellence, Teamwork and Integrity”, and who are committed to the mission of the Department of Physical Therapy & Human Movement Sciences, and the vision of the American Physical Therapy Association.
- Provide comprehensive education, clinical training, and mentorship to foster residents’ development as clinical specialists in acute care physical therapy and promote a culture of quality education, as well as to prepare residents for the acute care specialty exam when it becomes available.
- Develop physical therapists who will advance the practice of physical therapy in the acute care environment by participating in research or quality improvement projects.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive acute care curriculum that fosters resident clinical reasoning and inquiry, patient-centered care, and evidence-based examination, evaluation and treatment of the acute care patient.
- Foster development of residents' teaching skills through mentored teaching with PTHMS faculty.

Residency Program and Content

Residents are typically scheduled for 32 clinical hours per week including the mandatory mentored hours and intermittent weekend hours. Other residency activities such as didactic sessions, special clinical observations and experiences, research, and independent study-time are in addition to scheduled clinical time. Approximately one day per week will be devoted to a combination of didactic pursuits, clinical observations, interacting with other healthcare professionals, research, and teaching. The other 4 to 4.5 days will be spent treating patients either independently or in conjunction with a mentor.

Clinical Practice

Clinical practice will occur throughout Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s inpatient units, including but not limited to orthopedics, neurosciences, general medicine, cardiopulmonary, general surgery, oncology, obstetrics and emergency medicine. Patients will have a wide range of diagnoses. Didactic work and learning experiences will be centrally focused within the hospital’s clinical service lines. Additional educational opportunities will occur at the departmental level, within the organization, in adult outpatient departments of the main hospital as well as at NUPTHMS.

Clinical Mentoring

The residency incorporates at minimum 150 hours of clinical mentoring (3-4 hours per week), the majority of which involves the mentor observing the resident, followed by case-discussion. Residency mentors are selected through a competitive process from an experienced physical therapist pool at NMH. Most mentors have or are applying for board-certified specialty. Specialties represented by mentors include Geriatrics, Cardiovascular & Pulmonary, Neurologic, and Oncologic Physical Therapy.

Educational Content

The NM Acute Care Physical Therapy Residency will cover all didactic content required by ABPTRFE, and will prepare residents for the anticipated ABPTS acute care board-certification examination when it comes available.

Curriculum highlights include, but not limited to:

- 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
- Role of PT in inpatient wound care; pressure injury prevention, observation of wound care RN
- 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: each resident will be responsible for completing an acute care focused research or quality improvement project in conjunction with or under the guidance of residency faculty or NM/NUPTHMS researchers.

Educational Structure:

- Educational hours: Over 350 hours including interdisciplinary experiences, research/quality improvement work and teaching in the NU DPT program
- Periodic didactic sessions at PTHMS with one or more members of the PTHMS faculty
 - Sessions will be a combination of lecture, lab, online modules, and discussions
- Grand rounds opportunities in various related departments including: orthopedics, ethics, patient safety, stroke, etc.
- 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:

Residents will participate as a lab assistant and lead small group discussions in the DPT student program at NU. Curriculum participation includes: Examination and Evaluation I, Foundations of Physical Therapy I, and Clinical Management of Patients with Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Dysfunction. Inter-disciplinary education will also be take place with medical students, residents, RNs, etc. at NMH.

Specialty Experiences (may include the following):

- Participation in specialty outpatient clinics associated with the hospital including: ALS, muscular dystrophy, liver transplant, cystic fibrosis, bariatric, etc.
- Surgical observations

Residency Logistics for NMH-employed Residents:

- Residents will be salaried employees of Northwestern Medicine
- For further details, see the NM job description for Acute Care Physical Therapy Resident/Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Residency- Residency Handbook
- Hours: Schedule includes approximately 32 clinical hours per week plus 10 to 15 hours devoted to the didactic program, research, and observations. Schedules may fluctuate throughout the course of the residency to maximize clinical, didactic, and experimental opportunities
- Due to the intensive nature of this 12-month residency training, outside employment during the residency is strongly discouraged
- Resident salary: 80% that of a new graduate, entry-level physical therapist salary at NMH. Salary and benefits for the position of Physical Therapy Resident will be listed in employment offer letter, if selected
- Tuition: There is no tuition associated with admission into the NM Acute Care Residency Program. However, a one-time non-refundable \$200 check is required as part of a Letter of Agreement to enter the residency program
- Financial aid/stipends are not offered as part of this program due to the lack of tuition
- As a NM employee, residents will be allotted \$1,000 to utilize for continuing education course registration (not travel and/or lodging costs). Residents will abide by the procedures to apply for and utilize these funds. If registration fees exceed the allocated \$1,000 budget, resident is responsible for remaining course registration cost.

Residency Completion:

Employment as an NMH resident is limited to the period approved for completion of the residency. Upon completion of the residency and taking accrued vacation and paid time off, the resident's employment at NMH will end unless the resident has applied for an open position at NMH and has been accepted by NMH for that position. Similarly, any resident who was an NMH employee prior to being admitted into the residency is not guaranteed a return to their prior position, and must apply for an open position either prior to or upon completion of the residency. NMH will make every effort to place residency graduates who were employed at NMH pre-residency.

Residency Eligibility and Requirements for Admission:

- Current licensure in good standing or eligibility for licensure as a physical therapist in the State of Illinois. Active licensure in Illinois is required prior to the start date. Candidates should plan to sit for the National Physical Therapy Exam (NPTE) no later than April 2026 to ensure licensure by the start date.
- Current Basic Cardiac Life Support (BLS) certification and proof of current APTA membership
- Transcripts from accredited physical therapy program
- Current curriculum vitae
- Three letters of recommendation
- Additional requirements: Personal statement, three professional references, meet criteria for employment at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and be fully approved to start orientation as an

- Note: 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 Application Process:

- **As the Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Residency is an accredited program through ABPTRFE. Candidates must apply to the NM Acute Care residency through the RF-PTCAS national common residency application system, online.**
[RF-PTCAS | Applicant Login Page Section \(liaisoncas.com\)](#)
- Applicants must provide the following:
 - Current CV/Resume
 - Personal Statement that reflects the applicants desire to complete an acute care residency within the NM Acute Care Residency
 - 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, short term and long-term goals following completion of acute care residency
 - **Three** letters of recommendation, including at least **two** of the following:
 - Current or former physical therapist supervisor (or CI, if a recent graduate with less than 6 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 the applicant has collaborated with in the past year in clinical care or research.
 - DPT Transcript
- The NM Acute Care Residency Board reviews applications and selects candidates to proceed to the interview phase
 - Applicants who are selected for interview should be prepared for topics such as:
 - Why do you want to complete an acute care residency?
 - Discussion related to any application documents
 - Discussion of clinical practice, patient cases, and professional issues
 - Discussion of physical therapy research
 - Demonstration of patient interactions and/or intervention plans
- The Residency Board is committed to selecting applicants who, based on past educational, clinical and personal experience and achievement, demonstrate excellent prospects for successful completion of all the residency requirements, professional leadership, and diligent application of their time and talent to 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 selected admission into the residency, a candidate will receive a Letter of Agreement into the Northwestern Medicine Acute Care Residency Program from the Residency Director, Kyle Strickland, PT, DPT and an offer letter from NM Human Resources outlining the NM employee-onboarding requirements
- An accepted candidate confirms intent to join the residency by taking the following actions
 - Sends \$200 non-refundable deposit check to the Residency Director
 - Follows all residency policies, procedures, and rules
 - Accept the residency financial agreement as to salary and benefits
 - Make arrangements with NM Human Resources to complete any remaining NM employment requirements. If at any time, for any reason, the candidate is deemed by NM to be ineligible for employment, participation in the residency will be automatically denied or terminated
 - Accept terms of NM employment agreement/contract

Resident Handbook

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

Residency Calendar for 2026-2027 Admission Cycle (Dates may change):

- **Residency application submission deadline: February 2, 2026**
- **Candidate interviews: Anticipated February 2026**
- **Residency Director notifies candidates accepted into the residency: Within 2-3 weeks from interview date**
- **Residency starting date: Anticipated August 19, 2026**

For further information regarding the residency please contact Residency Leadership:

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