

History

Physicians like Hippocrates and later Galenus are believed to have been the first practitioners of physical therapy, advocating massage, manual therapy techniques and hydrotherapy to treat people in 460 BC.[verification needed] After the development of orthopedics in the eighteenth century, machines like the Gymnasticon were developed to treat gout and similar diseases by systematic exercise of the joints, similar to later developments in physical therapy. The earliest documented origins of actual physical therapy as a professional group date back to Per Henrik Ling, "Father of Swedish Gymnastics," who founded the Royal Central Institute of Gymnastics (RCIG) in 1813 for manipulation, and exercise. The Swedish word for physical therapist is sjukgymnast = someone involved in gymnastics for those who are ill. In 1887, PTs were given official registration by Sweden's National Board of Health and Welfare. Other countries soon followed. In 1894, four nurses in Great Britain formed the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. The School of Physiotherapy at the University of Otago in New Zealand in 1913, and the United States' 1914 Reed College in Portland, Oregon, which graduated "reconstruction aides." Since the profession's inception, spinal manipulative therapy has been a component of the physical therapist practice.

Modern physical therapy was established towards the end of the 19th century due to events that had an effect on a global scale, which called for rapid advances in physical therapy. Soon following American orthopedic surgeons began treating children with disabilities and began employing women trained in physical education, and remedial exercise. These treatments were applied and promoted further during the Polio outbreak of 1916. During the First World War women were recruited to work with and restore physical function to injured soldiers, and the field of physical therapy was institutionalized. In 1918 the term "Reconstruction Aide" was used to refer to individuals practicing physical therapy. The first school of physical therapy was established at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C., following the outbreak of World War I. Research catalyzed the physical therapy movement. The first physical therapy research was published in the United States in March 1921 in "The PT Review." In the same year, Mary McMillan organized the Physical Therapy Association (now called the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)). In 1924, the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation promoted the field by touting physical therapy as a treatment for polio. Treatment through the 1940s primarily consisted of exercise, massage, and traction. Manipulative procedures to the spine and extremity joints began to be practiced, especially in the British Commonwealth countries, in the early 1950s. Around this time when polio vaccines were developed, physical therapists have become a normal occurrence in hospitals throughout North America and Europe. In the late 1950s, physical therapists started to move beyond hospital-based practice to outpatient orthopedic clinics, public schools, colleges/universities health-centres, geriatric settings (skilled nursing facilities), rehabilitation centers and medical centers. Specialization for physical therapy in the U.S. occurred in 1974, with the Orthopaedic Section of the APTA being formed for those physical therapists specializing in orthopaedics. In the same year, the International Federation of Orthopaedic Manipulative Physical Therapists was formed, which has ever since played an important role in advancing manual therapy worldwide.