



The Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand

# GENERAL SCOPE OF PRACTICE CONSULTATION PAPER

**Address:** Physiotherapy Board  
PO Box 10734  
Wellington 6143  
**Website:** [www.physioboard.org.nz](http://www.physioboard.org.nz)  
**Date:** 24 July 2008

## BACKGROUND

### 1 Current Situation

Under section 11 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) the Board must specify scopes of practice for physiotherapists.

The Board may describe a scope in any way that the Board thinks is fit, including:

*“by reference to a name or form of words that is commonly understood by persons who work in the health sector, by reference to an area of science or learning, by reference to tasks commonly performed or by reference to illnesses or conditions to be diagnosed, treated or managed.”*

All scopes of practice must be published in the *Gazette*. The Board currently has three scopes of practice:

1. General scope of practice - Physiotherapist
2. Special Purpose scope of practice - Visiting Physiotherapy Presenter/Educator
3. Special Purpose scope of practice - Postgraduate Physiotherapy Student

All physiotherapists actively practising in New Zealand practise within the general scope of practice.

Recently the Board reviewed the key competencies for registration and during this procedure concluded that a new definition of general scope of practice in physiotherapy was required. It was felt that a more comprehensive and contemporary description of general physiotherapy practice was needed to reflect the dynamic nature of the profession. However the definition cannot be too restrictive as it must accommodate a range of practice environments and the future direction of physiotherapy as far as that can be ascertained.

The Physiotherapy Board now proposes to change the definition of the general scope of practice.

### 2 Purpose of this consultation

Under section 14 of the HPCA Act the Board is obligated to consult with *“persons who the authority considers are able to represent the views of health practitioners, or classes of health practitioners, registered with the authority”* and with organisations the Board *“considers will be affected by the proposal or whose members will be affected by the proposal”*.

The Board believes it is crucial to get formal feedback from the profession and other interested parties to determine the final wording of the scope.

The purpose of this paper is to:

- Seek further information and input from the profession

- invite comment on the rewording and ensure it is readily understood by physiotherapists, by the public and by other key stakeholders.

### 3 Providing Feedback

Please comment as fully as possible using the following points as a guide:

- some questions are included to assist you in formulating your comments
- wherever possible, comments should be specific to a particular section of the document
- the use of examples to illustrate particular points is encouraged.

### 4 Closing Date For Submissions

The closing date for submissions is **Monday 25 August 2008**. Please send your submission to:

The Registrar  
Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand,  
PO Box 10 734  
Wellington 6143

Alternatively you may email your submission to  
[r.matthews@physioboard.org.nz](mailto:r.matthews@physioboard.org.nz)

The Board cannot guarantee that consultation responses received after the stated deadline will be considered.

### 5 Consultation Responses

Once the consultation period is over, the Board will consider all submissions made on the proposed new general scope of practice. The new general scope of practice will be confirmed by the Board and then gazetted.

The Board will keep the profession and other interested parties informed on the progress of this project via the website [www.physioboard.org.nz](http://www.physioboard.org.nz) and "inTouch" (the Board's newsletter).

## CONSULTATION ON GENERAL SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR PHYSIOTHERAPY IN NEW ZEALAND: THE PROPOSAL

### Current Definition

The Board's present general scope of practice is:

*"Physiotherapists are registered healthcare practitioners educated to apply scientific knowledge and clinical reasoning to assess, diagnose and manage human function. They promote mobility, health and independence; rehabilitate; and maximise potential for activity"*

The practice of physiotherapy is described as including:

- "- assessing, diagnosing, treating, reporting or giving advice in the capacity of a physiotherapist, using the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competence initially attained for registration as a physiotherapist in New Zealand and built upon in postgraduate and continuing physiotherapy education and wherever there could be an issue of public safety;*
- advertising, holding out to the public, or representing in any manner that one is authorised to practice physiotherapy in New Zealand."*

*"Practice in this context goes wider than clinical medicine to include teaching, research, medical or health management, in hospitals, clinics, general practices and community and institutional contexts, whether paid or voluntary, given that such roles influence clinical practice and public safety".*

## PROPOSED DEFINITION

The proposed new description for the general scope of practice is:

***Physiotherapy provides services to individuals and populations to develop, maintain and restore maximum movement and functional ability throughout the lifespan. This includes providing services in circumstances where movement and function are threatened by ageing, injury, disease or environmental factors. Functional movement is central to what it means to be healthy. Physiotherapy is concerned with identifying and maximising quality of life and movement potential within the spheres of promotion, prevention, treatment/intervention, habilitation and rehabilitation. This encompasses physical, psychological, emotional, and social well being. Physiotherapy involves the interaction between physiotherapists, patients/clients, other health professionals, families/whanau, care givers, and communities in a process where movement potential is assessed, goals are agreed upon, using knowledge and skills unique to physiotherapists.***

***The practice of physiotherapy is not confined to clinical practice, and encompasses all roles that a physiotherapist may assume such as patient/client care, health management, research, policy making, educating and consulting.***

The proposed description of physiotherapy is based on the statement developed by the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT).

<http://www.wcpt.org/publications/docs.php>

Please refer to the above definition when considering your responses to the consultation.

## QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

### PROPOSAL: GENERAL SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR PHYSIOTHERAPY

1. Does this new definition fully describe the role of a physiotherapist?

Fully

Partially

Poorly

No opinion


Explain the reasons for your answer:

2. Does this new definition uniquely describe the practice of physiotherapy?  
i.e. does this description differentiate the practice of physiotherapy from other therapies/treatments provided by other health practitioners or non-registered individuals?

Fully

Partially

Poorly

No opinion


Explain the reasons for your answer:

3. (a) In your opinion will this scope of practice be understood by members of the public?

Fully

Partially

Poorly

No opinion


Any further comments?

- (b) Will the proposed definition help the public to identify those practitioners who are registered and competent to practise?

Fully

Partially

Poorly

No opinion


Any further comments?

4. (a) Does this new definition capture all the services that registered physiotherapists may currently provide to "individuals and populations" ?

Fully

Partially

Poorly

No opinion


Any further comments?

(b) Would this definition be appropriate over the next five to ten years?

Yes [ ]      No [ ]      No Opinion [ ]

Explain the reasons for your answer:

5. In your opinion are there any risks or disadvantages in changing the definition of the general scope of practice?

Yes [ ]      No [ ]      No Opinion [ ]

If yes please explain the reasons for your answer.

6. Do you have any other comments?

<b>THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK</b>
------------------------------------

**What stakeholder group do you belong to?**

1. Registered physiotherapist

2. Other registered health practitioner

3. Employer

4. Professional organisation

5. Other

Government/Ministry

Academic/educational

Auditing organisation

Other health related organisation ( such as ACC, HDC)

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_



**Your name:**

**Your organisation:**

Organisations or individuals will not be identified in the analysis. Data will be collated generically. Your name and organisation will be listed in the final report as a record of all consultations received and considered.