

Position Statement

Physiotherapy Specialist

Purpose

To clarify the use of the title of the new scope 'Physiotherapy Specialist' for physiotherapists and other stakeholders in New Zealand.

Introduction

Physiotherapy Specialist is now a gazetted 'Scope of Practice' within the Health Practitioners Competency Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA) ("New Zealand Gazette Notice," 2012)

The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) provides a framework for the regulation of health practitioners in order to protect the public where there is a risk of harm from professional practice ("Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act," 2011).

The HPCA act is New Zealand law and the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand is the authority which oversees its application for physiotherapists, which includes physiotherapy specialists.

The term Physiotherapy Specialist may be used differently in other countries. Other terminology to denote specialisation in an area of physiotherapy may include (but is not limited to) advanced practitioner, expert, consultant, and extended scope of practice (ESP) physiotherapist. These do not equate to Physiotherapy Specialist in New Zealand.

Gazetted Scope of practice and qualifications of a physiotherapy specialist in New Zealand ("New Zealand Gazette Notice," 2012)

Scope of Practice - Physiotherapy Specialist

- *Physiotherapy specialists are expert physiotherapists who have advanced education, knowledge and skills to practise within a specific area of clinical practice;*
- *as specialist clinicians, they demonstrate leadership in consultancy, education and research;*
- *they work collaboratively with the physiotherapy profession and within the wider health team across a range of health and disability settings;*
- *physiotherapy specialists actively participate and take a leadership role in professional activities, including local and national strategy and policy development; and*
- *they work in partnership with individuals, whanau, families and communities to optimise health outcomes.*

Qualifications:

Pursuant to section 12 of the Act, the following qualifications are prescribed for registration as a physiotherapy specialist:

Qualifications Prescribed for Registration in the Scope of Practice: Physiotherapy Specialist

- Provide evidence of successful completion of a minimum of a clinically focused postgraduate Master's Degree programme, relevant to the specialist area of physiotherapy practice; and

- successful completion of the assessment process approved by the Physiotherapy Board for persons who have met all other set criteria for physiotherapy specialist registration.

[New Zealand Gazette Notice.](#)

How and where does a Physiotherapy Specialist practice?

This new scope identifies physiotherapists who may provide second opinions, run secondary services clinics, provide services in primary care to reduce demand for GP services, improve secondary care efficiency, act as expertise in complaint issues and be reviewers of colleagues practice. They will practice in both the public and private sector.

Which areas of clinical practice are available for specialisation?

The categories or areas of clinical practice for a Physiotherapy Specialist are based on consumer needs, rather than a model based on the speciality interests of physiotherapists. The approved categories for registration under this scope are:

- Musculoskeletal,
- Cardio respiratory,
- Neurology,
- Continence and Women's Health,
- Paediatrics,
- Older adults and
- General.

The General category is for a physiotherapist who has expertise in two (or more) areas of the body systems framework, and may also work across population groups. This area may be appropriate for physiotherapists who have a broad practice base and may be working in community settings and/or smaller communities across New Zealand.

Code of practice and use of the term(s)

A physiotherapist who has met the requirements of the Physiotherapy Specialist scope of practice may call themselves a Physiotherapy Specialist in one of the nominated categories e.g. Physiotherapy Specialist – Musculoskeletal.

The Physiotherapy Specialist can determine how they promote themselves to further define their practice within these specialty areas. It is expected that all physiotherapists will uphold the Aotearoa New Zealand Physiotherapy Code of Ethics (2012), and only promote themselves for those areas for which they are qualified.

For example, a Physiotherapy Specialist – Musculoskeletal who has a Masters degree and/or College membership in Occupational Health, may advertise themselves as a Physiotherapy Specialist - Musculoskeletal who *specialises in* Occupational Health (see below):

Mary Smith

Physiotherapy Specialist – Musculoskeletal

MPhty (Occupational Health)¹, NZRPS², MPNZ³, MNZCP (Occupational Health)⁴

This code of practice is in keeping with legal advice⁵ sought on the use of the title Physiotherapy Specialist, pursuant to Sections 7 and 118 of the HPCA Act 2003 ("Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act ", 2003).

What guidance is available for advertising and promotion?

Principle 10.4 (sub-point 1) of 'The Aotearoa New Zealand Physiotherapy Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct' (2011), states

"Physiotherapists must, when engaged in advertising or promotion:

- *Claim only those qualifications to which they are entitled and ensure that any perceived or actual misinterpretations about qualifications are avoided and corrected."*

("Aotearoa New Zealand Physiotherapy Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct with Commentary," 2011)

In summary

- *A physiotherapist in New Zealand can only call themselves a Physiotherapy Specialist if they have met the requirements for a Physiotherapy Specialist scope of practice in a category of specialisation as defined by the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand and stated on their annual practising certificate (APC).*
- *If a physiotherapist works in a defined area of practice, with postgraduate qualifications in that area, or other post registration qualifications, they may say that they are a physiotherapist with a special interest in that area, and may list their qualifications. ("Position statements," 2011)*

[Physiotherapy Board position statement on defined area of practice](#)

¹ Relevant Masters degree

² New Zealand Registered Physiotherapy Specialist

³ Member, Physiotherapy New Zealand

⁴ Member, New Zealand College of Physiotherapy (Occupational Health)

⁵ Buddle Findlay, Barristers and Solicitors, memorandum to the Physiotherapy Board 28th February 2012

References

Ministry of Health. (2011). *Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act*. Retrieved August 2013, from Ministry of Health: <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/regulation-health-and-disability-system/health-practitioners-competence-assurance-act>

Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand. (2011, July). *Position statements*. Retrieved August 2013, from Defined Field of Interest Position Statement: <http://www.physioboard.org.nz/index.php?super=yes&URLL=DefinedFieldofInterestPositionStatement>

The Department of Internal Affairs. (2012, November 1). *New Zealand Gazette Notice*. Retrieved July 17/07/2013, 2013, from Notice Of Scope Of Practice: Physiotherapy Specialist And Related Qualifications Prescribed By The Physiotherapy Board: [http://www.dia.govt.nz/Pubforms.nsf/NZGZT/SupplementHealthPCA120Sep04.pdf/\\$file/SupplementHealthPCA120Sep04.pdf](http://www.dia.govt.nz/Pubforms.nsf/NZGZT/SupplementHealthPCA120Sep04.pdf/$file/SupplementHealthPCA120Sep04.pdf)

The Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand and Physiotherapy New Zealand. (2011, October). *Aotearoa New Zealand Physiotherapy Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct with Commentary*.