Position Statement

New Zealand registered physiotherapists practising in a defined field

A physiotherapist practising in a defined field is deemed to be competent in that area of practice when they demonstrate relevant and appropriate education and training specific to that field of practice. The approach the Board has taken is one of self-regulation and it is the responsibility of the physiotherapist and employer to ensure that their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities support their defined field or area of practice.

Purpose

This position statement provides guidance for physiotherapists who are working in new or emerging fields of practice. The general scope of practice for physiotherapists registered in New Zealand is intentionally broad so as to ensure the health and safety of the public, yet allow for workforce flexibility and responsiveness to growing healthcare demands.

Introduction

As the physiotherapy profession continues to evolve, areas of practice may change or expand and new fields of practice may emerge to meet health demands. While it is important to accommodate these initiatives, the health and safety of the public must remain paramount.

Some areas of practice will require a more structured programme involving credentialing or extended scope, such as the proposed extended scopes of prescribing or injecting.

Furthermore, high-risk activities such as cervical manipulation and invasive techniques must follow established guidelines published by the Board and/or Special Interest Groups of Physiotherapy New Zealand.

Education, training and CPD

It is the physiotherapist's responsibility to

- ensure they have undertaken an appropriate, relevant and recognised education and training programme for practising in their defined field,
- ensure that they work within their scope of practice, have professional support and mentoring structures in place, and meet their professional and ethical obligations,
- ensure that they maintain competence in their defined field of practice by undertaking relevant and ongoing CPD and peer review, and
- ensure that a balance exists for the known benefit and the known harm of a treatment or modality before incorporating it into their practice.

Self evaluation

A physiotherapist may undertake a brief self-evaluation process to obtain a perspective on the safety and competence of their practice in their defined field.

- Is the education and training undertaken in my defined field recognised by my peers as being appropriate for safe, evidence informed practice?

- Have I continued to update my knowledge around the defined field of interest? *Clear evidence for this must be included in any recertification documentation.*
- Have I ensured that I do not work in isolation in my defined field of practice? E.g. How can I demonstrate that I am not isolated from peer input, mentoring and review?
- Would I be able to defend my position if an adverse event occurred?

In answering these questions, the physiotherapist needs to consider how confident they would be in defending their position if an adverse event occurred. Physiotherapists should balance both the known benefit and the know harm of a treatment or modality before incorporating it into their practice.

Further consideration should be given to whether work in a defined field would be covered by Public Liability Insurance or DHB insurance. The Board recommends that physiotherapists seek advice from their respective insurance companies or DHB-based legal representative, or from an independent legal representative.

If the Board receives a complaint about a physiotherapist practising in a defined field then under the Board's complaints handling process, experts in the field will be consulted. These advisors will consider whether the CPD activities undertaken are appropriate and support the practitioner's practice rationale.

If you are unsure as to whether your defined field of practice falls within General Scope and meets the criteria described in this position statement, please contact the Physiotherapy Board.