Draft Standards for consultation

Physiotherapy Practice

Physiotherapy Board, May 2017
Patients expect and are entitled to quality physiotherapy. Physiotherapists make the care of patients their first concern: they are competent; keep their knowledge and skills up to date; are honest and trustworthy and act ethically; establish and maintain good relationships with patients, their whanau and families, and colleagues.

The principal purpose of the Physiotherapy Board (Board) is to protect the health and safety of the public by providing mechanisms to ensure physiotherapists are competent and fit to practise.

The Board has the following key functions:

- registering physiotherapists
- determining qualifications
- prescribing scopes of practice
- setting standards and supporting physiotherapists to uphold these standards
- recertifying and promoting lifelong learning for physiotherapists
- reviewing the practice of physiotherapists if there is a concern about performance, professional conduct or health
- accrediting entry-level physiotherapy programmes and associated institutions.
**About Physiotherapy Practice**

Under section 118(i) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCAA), a function of the Physiotherapy Board is to set standards of clinical competence, cultural competence and ethical conduct for physiotherapists. Under Right 4 of the *Code of Health and Disability Service Consumers’ Rights* patients also have “the right to have services provided that comply with legal, professional, ethical and other relevant standards.” The Board has developed *Physiotherapy Practice* to be the foundation document for these standards.

*Physiotherapy Practice* provides an overview to assist physiotherapists understand, and comply with the requirements of legislation. There are three main sections; the physiotherapy practice thresholds, the code of ethics and professional conduct, and the professional and practice standards. Together these describe what the public and the profession expect of a competent physiotherapist and have been developed through discussion with the public and the profession.

*Physiotherapy Practice* is not exhaustive. There may be obligations or situations that are not expressly provided. In such circumstances, a physiotherapist’s first priority should always be the care of his or her patient.

*Physiotherapy Practice* is addressed to physiotherapists but is also intended to let the public know what they can expect from physiotherapists.

**How Physiotherapy Practice applies to you**

- For physiotherapy students, *Physiotherapy Practice* identifies the basic duties of a good physiotherapist and serves as a source of education and reflection.

- For physiotherapists, *Physiotherapy Practice* serves as a basis for you to monitor, and reflect on, your own conduct and that of your colleagues. The Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal, the Board’s Professional Conduct Committees and the Health and Disability Commissioner may use *Physiotherapy Practice* as a standard by which to measure your professional conduct.

- For patients, *Physiotherapy Practice* provides guidance for assessing the minimum ethical and clinical conduct expected of physiotherapists.

If you believe that a physiotherapist is not meeting standards outlined in *Physiotherapy Practice*, you should raise your concerns with the physiotherapist, draw that matter to the attention of the physiotherapist’s employer, or report your concerns to the Registrar of the Physiotherapy Board,¹ or the Office of the Health and Disability Commissioner,² or in the event

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¹ There is a section on the Board’s website where you can register a complaint or concern, or you can telephone the Board on 04 471 2610

² Telephone 0800 11 22 33 or email hdc@hdc.org.nz. For more information, refer to www.hdc.org.nz
of matters related to health information privacy and security - the Office of the Privacy Commissioner.

Professionalism

Patients trust their physiotherapists with their health and wellbeing. Professionalism is the core of being a physiotherapist. This has been defined as:

‘An occupation whose core element is work based upon the mastery of a complex body of knowledge and skills. It is a vocation in which knowledge of some department of science or learning or the practice of an art founded upon it is used in the service of others. Its members are governed by codes of ethics and profess a commitment to competence, integrity and morality, altruism, and the promotion of the public good within their domain. These commitments form the basis of a social contract between a profession and society, which in return grants the profession a monopoly over the use of its knowledge base, the right to considerable autonomy in practice and the privilege of self-regulation. Professions and their members are accountable to those served, to the profession and to society.’

Accepting the obligation to maintain and improve standards

Professionalism includes the obligation to maintain and improve standards, specifically:

- Act in accordance with relevant thresholds, codes and standards.
- Keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date
- Recognise, and work within, the limits of your competence.
- Be committed to autonomous maintenance and improvement in your clinical standards in line with evidence-based practice.
- Demonstrate reflectiveness, personal awareness, the ability to seek and respond constructively to feedback and the willingness to share your knowledge and to learn from others.
- Accept a responsibility for maintaining the standards of the profession.
- Remember that you are personally accountable for your professional practice – you must always be prepared to explain your decisions and actions.

Legislation and standards set by other agencies

The Health Practitioner Competence Assurance Act 2003 has its principal purpose to protect the health and safety of the public by providing mechanisms to ensure that health practitioners are competent and fit to practice in their profession.

3 Telephone 0800 80 39 09, or email enquiries@privacy.org.nz. For more information, refer to www.privacy.org.nz

The Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers’ Rights gives rights to consumers, and places obligations on all people and organisations providing health and disability services, including physiotherapists.

The Health Information Privacy Code 1994 governs the collection and use of health information. A plain English edition has been published by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner and is available from www.privacy.org.nz.

New Zealand is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Persons with Disabilities. This convention is intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. The convention includes provisions to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy full equality under the law, and have their rights and dignities protected.
Physiotherapy Practice Framework

There are four components to Framework:

- **Patients**: they are the centre of the framework.
- **Ethics**: the Aotearoa New Zealand Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.
- **Practice Thresholds**: the Physiotherapy Practitioner Thresholds of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.
- **Professional and Practice standards**: detailed standards related to specific professional and practice areas.

Collectively, the Ethics, the Practice Thresholds, with the Professional and Practice Standards form the Physiotherapy Practice Framework. These define the standard of ethical conduct, clinical and cultural competence that all registered physiotherapists legally must meet.
**Index of documents**

**Section 1**  

The Aotearoa New Zealand Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, with commentary, is a joint publication with Physiotherapy New Zealand (PNZ) that describes responsibilities expected of physiotherapists in Aotearoa New Zealand.

**Section 2**  
Physiotherapy Practice Thresholds in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (2015)

The Physiotherapy practice thresholds describe the threshold competence required for initial and continuing registration as a physiotherapist in both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

**Section 3**  
Board Standards

The Board Standards describe in greater detail the expected Professional and Practice standards for specific issues which have been identified as relevant for good physiotherapy practice.

**Professional Standards**

- Cultural competence
- Informed Consent
- Involvement of an additional person during a consultation
- Sexual and emotional boundaries
- Team sports physiotherapist
- The use of physiotherapy titles
- Treatment of whanau and family members and self-Treatment

**Practice Standards**

- Administering medicines in the absence of a doctor
- Advertising
- Assessment for a third party
- Cervical manipulation
- Internet and electronic communication
- Physiotherapy health records
- Telehealth

**Note:** Physiotherapists assess and treat patients and also have work with clients. These standards refer to patients, only to improve the readability of the documents for both the public and physiotherapist.