

## **Position Statement**

### **Cultural Competence**

#### **Physiotherapy Cultural Competence Standards**

Standards of cultural competence are integrated, both implicitly and explicitly, throughout all the physiotherapy competencies and are incorporated into the *Aotearoa New Zealand Physiotherapy Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*.

Physiotherapy cultural competence standards are outlined in the Physiotherapy Board's document *Physiotherapy Competencies for Physiotherapy Practice in New Zealand*. The *Aotearoa New Zealand Physiotherapy Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* provides principles of ethical conduct.

#### **Purpose of the Statement**

The Physiotherapy Board acknowledges the importance of cultural competence as being essential for the safe and effective practice of physiotherapy in Aotearoa New Zealand. The purpose of this statement is to enhance the quality of health care services and outcomes for health consumers. This statement outlines the attitudes, knowledge and skills expected of physiotherapists in their interactions with health consumers.

This statement refers to cultural competence in respect of all cultures represented in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Physiotherapy Board continues to develop further resources to assist physiotherapists when providing services to health consumers from the diverse cultural groups represented in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Physiotherapy Board recognises that acquiring cultural awareness and competence is cumulative and that physiotherapists recognise cultural competence as continuous life long learning.

#### **Introduction**

Physiotherapists in Aotearoa New Zealand practise within a culturally diverse environment. Therefore physiotherapists working in Aotearoa New Zealand are required to be competent when engaging with health consumers whose cultures may differ from their own and with colleagues and other health professionals from diverse backgrounds.

Health consumers' cultures affect the way they understand health, well being and illness, the choices regarding their health, how they access health care services and how they respond to interventions.

Culturally competent physiotherapists contribute to improved and more equitable outcomes for health consumers and all those working in the health sector through:

- the understanding of their own culture and that of the consumer and the organisation where the Physiotherapist is employed.
- continued development of confidence in the physiotherapist-patient/client relationships;
- improvement in communication with and increased information gained from patients/clients;
- improved communication with other providers and colleagues;
- development of appropriate patient/client-centred goals;
- increased engagement with treatment plans ensuring better health outcomes;
- increased patient/client, whānau and family satisfaction;
- improvement in the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of health care delivery.
- Advancing knowledge and understanding of the diverse cultures where they are employed.

The Government affirms that Māori as **tangata whenua** hold a unique place in our country, and that Te Tiriti o Waitangi -Treaty of Waitangi is the nation's founding document. To secure the Treaty's place within the health sector is fundamental to the improvement of Māori health. The Physiotherapy Board is committed to ensuring Māori have at least the same health outcomes as non-Māori New Zealanders.

### **Definition of Cultural Competence**

The following is a definition of cultural competence:

Physiotherapist's Aotearoa New Zealand must be able to work effectively with people whose cultural realities are different to their own. Culture may include but not limited to age, gender, sexual orientation, race, socioeconomic status (including occupation), religion, physical mental or other impairments, ethnicity and organisational culture. A holistic, client-centred approach to practice requires cultural competence.

Cultural competence is a contemporary term that encompasses concepts which are holistic and client-centred. Culturally responsive practice requires physiotherapists to continuously reflect on their own culture as well as their client's culture and to engage in new and ongoing learning in order to effectively interact with and respond to each client.

Physiotherapists in Aotearoa New Zealand require a working knowledge of factors that contribute to and influence the health and well-being of Māori communities including history, spirituality and relationship to land, and other determinants of Māori health.

To work successfully with health consumers of different cultural backgrounds, a physiotherapist needs to demonstrate appropriate attitudes, awareness, knowledge and skills.

### **Attitudes**

- A preparedness not to impose their own values on patients/clients
- A willingness to understand their own cultural values and beliefs and the influence these have on their interactions with patients/clients.
- A commitment to ongoing development of their own cultural awareness and practices including those of their fellow colleagues and staff
- A willingness to appropriately challenge the cultural bias of individuals or health systems where this will have a negative impact on patients/clients

### **Awareness and knowledge**

- An awareness and acknowledgement of their own limitations of cultural knowledge and an openness to ongoing learning and development
- An awareness of a patient's/client's right to identify with any cultural parameters that they choose
- An understanding that patients/clients may identify with multiple cultural groupings
- An awareness that a patient/client's culture may have an impact on
  - their perceptions of health, illness and disease
  - their health care practices
  - their interactions with medical professionals and health care systems
  - treatment preferences
- Recognition that Māori and other cultures' definitions of health may involve multiple dimensions that extend beyond the physical and medical diagnoses

## Skills

- Establish a rapport with health consumers of other cultures; and respectfully enquire about the cultural background and beliefs of the patient/client
- Identify how a health consumer's culture might inform the physiotherapist-patient/client relationship
- Identify actions (conduct) which may be appropriate and inappropriate
- Consider the health consumer's cultural beliefs, values, practices, and social rules in developing a relevant treatment plan for the patient/client
- Include a patient/client's whānau, family and community in their physiotherapy care where appropriate
- Work cooperatively with individuals and organisations in a patient/client's culture
- Work with other health care professionals to provide integrated culturally competent care
- Communicate effectively by:
  - recognising that communication styles of patients/clients may differ from their own and modifying as required
  - working with interpreters as required
- Acknowledge a cultural dissimilarity while discussing a patient/client-centered treatment plan
- Reflect on and improve their own practice to ensure equitable outcomes and demonstrate life-long learning in cultural competence

## References

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