

4.10 Communication and Consultation with Physicians or Appropriate Designates

Purpose:

As primary health care providers, physiotherapists have the responsibility to ensure that they have relevant health information regarding each client. In order to obtain this information, the physiotherapist may need to consult with a physician or appropriate designate, which may include, but is not limited to: physician's assistant, clinical assistant or nurse practitioner.

Ensuring proper communication and consultation is also described in the Essential Competencies Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada¹.

Policy:

All physiotherapists should communicate and consult with physicians and other recognized health care practitioners for the purposes of informing and being kept informed of relevant information on the client. This sharing of information and knowledge is critical to the provision of quality care for the client.

Guidelines:

A physiotherapist demonstrates the practice standard by:

- 1) Providing appropriate referrals to the physician or appropriate designate when
 - a. further investigation or consultation is required, for example:
 - red and/or yellow flags are present
 - significant deterioration in condition
 - with another health care professional (i.e. dietician or psychologist)
 - b. client is not responding to treatment as expected
 - c. required for insurance coverage (i.e. splints)
- 2) Obtaining missing medical information, for example:
 - a. patient's past medical history
 - b. specific treatment/surgical protocols or activity limitations
- 3) Exercising caution when treating clients without a physician or appropriate designate. Physiotherapists should understand the limits and opportunities within the practice setting to address health issues, and work collaboratively to develop strategies to optimize client care².
- 4) Respecting PHIA when information is being shared and communicated between the physiotherapist and physician or appropriate designate (see Record Keeping 4.17).

5) Refrain from charging a fee to a patient when a physiotherapist is providing documentation to a physician or appropriate designate (see Fee Schedule and Billing Practices 5.2).