

4.2 Concurrent Care by a Physiotherapist

Purpose:

Concurrent care is the treatment by a physiotherapist of a patient/client who is also being treated by another practitioner at the same time. The other practitioner may include another physiotherapist, a physician, nurse, occupational therapist or another health care professional. When a physiotherapist is treating a patient concurrently with another practitioner, communication is vital. Unless concurrent care is provided with appropriate communication, concerns such as the following may arise:

- Treatments may unknowingly counteract each other, even for two distinct conditions which may appear unrelated.
- Conflicting advice or information may be provided to the patient/client.
- There may be difficulties in assessing whether an intervention is beneficial or detrimental to the patient/client.

In the event of a malpractice claim, it is likely that every practitioner involved in the patient's care will be held legally liable.

Collaboration and inter-professional teamwork are also described in the Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada¹

Policy:

A physiotherapist may provide concurrent care when, in their professional judgment, the treatment is required, appropriate and compatible with treatment approach of the other treating professional and the care does not constitute an unethical or inefficient use of health care resources.

Guidelines:

A physiotherapist demonstrates this practice standard by:

1. Ensuring that the concurrent treatment is appropriate to the needs of the patient/client
2. Ensuring concurrent care is complementary and done in consultation with the other health care professional
3. Ensuring that all practitioners have shared patient/client objectives
4. Ensuring that a patient/client is not receiving treatment for the same condition from another practitioner with conflicting treatment philosophies, approaches or objectives
5. Ensuring proper documentation in the client record (see Standard 4.17 on Record Keeping)

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Physiotherapists have the right to refuse to provide treatment to a client when the existence of concurrent treatment is determined to be inappropriate. The situation should be clearly communicated to the patient. The patient should be allowed to choose his/her own course of action and if necessary, the physiotherapist should inform the patient of his/her right to further professional opinion.