

### 4.29 Complementary and Alternative Therapies

---

**Purpose:**

Commentary and alternative therapies (CAT) differ from conventional physiotherapy treatment practices because they are generally not evidence based. When a CAT undergoes rigorous testing, for example in a controlled and randomized trial, then the results dictate whether the CAT becomes a conventional treatment, whether the unorthodox becomes accepted and whether the unproven becomes proven. Assertions, speculation and testimonials do not substitute for scientific evidence.

Some registrants use complementary and alternative therapies in the treatment of their patients. The College considers CATs to be therapeutic options that may be used in addition to more commonly used conventional therapeutic interventions within the scope of physiotherapy practice.

**Definition:**

CAT's include a broad range of healing resources utilized for a variety of chronic and acute illnesses, pain management and palliative care that encompasses all health systems, modalities and practices and their accompanying theories for the treatment of illness or promoting health and well being. Boundaries between the CATs domain and the domain of the traditional system (including physiotherapy) are not always sharp or fixed.

**Policy:**

When CATs fall within the scope of physiotherapy practice, registrants may offer them as a physiotherapy service. Physiotherapists providing CATs must adhere to and maintain the same standards of practice that apply to any other activity that is within the scope of physiotherapy practice. CATs by themselves do not constitute physiotherapy practice. They are more appropriately considered as therapeutic options that may be used in addition to more frequently used conventional therapeutic interventions within the context of physiotherapy practice.

**Performance Expectations:**

A physiotherapist demonstrates the standard of practice by:

1. Ensuring that the treatment approach of the CAT permits the physiotherapist to maintain the standard of practice of the profession. This includes:

- Undertaking a physiotherapy assessment of the patient prior to explaining options for intervention.
  - Offering all conventional physiotherapy treatment plan options in addition to CATs. Providing CATs only within the context of a patient-centered care approach that involves discussion and consideration of the patient's treatment goals and all conventional options when developing the treatment plan.
  - Ensuring the patient's right to choose during the process of making informed decisions is respected (informed decisions include the client knowing when an option is a CAT).
  - Ensuring that the risk of harm to the patient is minimized.
2. The physiotherapist must evaluate the CAT under consideration to determine if the treatment (s) can be provided within the scope of practice of physiotherapy. If the physiotherapist determines that the CAT cannot be provided as part of the physiotherapy scope of practice, they must inform the patient.
  3. The physiotherapist must select appropriate CATs using an evidence-based approach that evaluates evidence relevant to the patient's presenting problem/condition.
  4. The physiotherapist practices CATs in accordance with the statutory framework governing physiotherapists' practice in Manitoba (*The Physiotherapists Act*, the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and *Physiotherapists Regulations*).
  5. The physiotherapist will practice CATs in compliance with any personal and professional obligations that the physiotherapist has to his/her profession, employer, the payor of the service and the practice setting. The physiotherapist must inform the patient and/or the payer as to whether the CAT under consideration will incur an additional cost to the patient and/or the payer.
  6. Ensuring that the physiotherapist is competent in the performance of the CAT being provided.