



PRACTICE STANDARDS

DATE: July 2009

REVISED: February 2006

RESPONSIBILITY: College Members

ALTERNATIVE / COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENT APPROACHES

The College recognizes that some members use complementary and alternative therapies¹ in the treatment of their clients. These are considered to be therapeutic options that may be used in addition to more commonly used or conventional therapeutic interventions within the context of physiotherapy practice. This standard includes emerging trends in physiotherapy.

STANDARD

Members may offer complementary and alternative therapies to their clients when those treatments fall within the scope of physiotherapy practice.

Members are expected to adhere to and maintain the same standard of practice for the profession that applies to any other intervention carried out within the scope of physiotherapy practice.

Performance Expectations:

A physiotherapist demonstrates the standard by:

1. Practicing within the physiotherapy scope of practice as defined in the Physiotherapy Act. Members must not represent themselves as a physiotherapist while providing any intervention that falls outside the scope of physiotherapy practice.
2. Ensuring that they maintain the standards of practice of the profession including:
 - Carrying out a full assessment and re-assessments on the client and making a physiotherapy diagnosis prior to determining potential interventions.
 - Offering the complementary or alternative therapy only in the context of a client-centred approach that involves discussion and consideration of the client's goals, as well as all conventional/traditional options.
 - Ensuring that the client is informed of the treatment options and obtaining informed consent for the complementary treatment; respecting the client's right to decline the treatment.
 - Ensuring that (s)he has the appropriate level of competency to perform the treatment.
 - Ensuring that risk of harm to the client is minimized.

3. Selecting the complementary or alternative therapy using a best practice² approach that uses evidence to inform your practice and to ensure that management of your client is based on the best available evidence relative to the client's presenting condition.
4. Informing the client of any additional cost associated with the treatment prior to commencing the treatment. Do not bill any payor of the service for a service that is not under the physiotherapy scope of practice.
5. Practicing in accordance with other relevant legislation or regulations pertaining to other health professions.

Definition

¹ **Complementary and Alternative Therapies (CATs):** A diverse range of health care practices that fall within both health promotion and therapeutic treatment for a variety of chronic and acute illnesses, pain management and palliative care. CATs include practices and ideas defined by their users as preventing or treating illness or promoting health. Boundaries between CATs domain and the domain of the traditional system are not always sharp or fixed.

² **Best Practice:** Evidence should be integrated with clinical experience, taking into consideration beliefs and values and the cultural context of the local environment. In addition, physiotherapists have a duty and responsibility not to use techniques and technologies that have been shown to be ineffective or unsafe.

Legislative Reference: Physiotherapy Act of Nova Scotia; C.22 Acts of 1998; s.2(r) and s.34(1).

Resources:

College of Physiotherapists of Ontario; *Standards of Professional Practice: Complementary and Alternative Therapies Feb 2005.*

Saskatchewan College of Physical Therapists; *Alternative therapy/ Dual Practice April 2004*

College of Physical Therapists of B.C.; *Non-traditional and Emerging Treatment Approaches*

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