



Canadian  
Physiotherapy  
Association

Association  
canadienne de  
physiothérapie

Position Statement

## Inter-professional Collaboration and Practice

A physiotherapist is an integral member of inter-professional collaborative models of care. Physiotherapists are competent, skilled and valuable members of collaborative practice and primary health care teams in every setting in which they practice.

Inter-professional collaboration is essential for effective and efficient patient and family-centred care.

### BACKGROUND

Traditionally, health professional education and health services planning and delivery has been focused on individual health disciplines with little, if any recognition, of the need for harmonization and collaboration. In 2004, the government of Canada stated its commitment to “health care renewal” with inter-professional collaboration being the “main action to initiate change.”<sup>1</sup> Its goal is to provide 50% of Canadians with access to multidisciplinary teams by 2011.<sup>1</sup>

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) worked collaboratively with 10 other health associations to develop *The Principles and Framework for Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Primary Health Care*.<sup>2</sup> CPA supports the principle of shared values, such as patient engagement, access, trust, respect and communication, for effective inter-professional collaboration.<sup>3</sup>

Inter-professional practice refers to “occasions when two or more professions learn with, from and about one another to improve collaboration and the quality of care.”<sup>4</sup> It implies trust, communication, respect and

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF) synthesis: Inter-professional collaboration and quality primary health care. 2007. Available at: [www.chsrf.ca](http://www.chsrf.ca). Accessed September 16, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration in primary health care. The principles and framework for interdisciplinary collaboration in primary health care. Available at: <http://www.eicp-acis.ca/en/principles/march/>. Accessed October 12, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Centre for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE). Interprofessional education. Available at: <http://www.caipe.org.uk/index.php?&page=define&nav=1>. Accessed October 12, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Way D, Jones L, Busing N. Implementing strategies: Collaboration in primary care – family doctors & nurse practitioners delivering shared care. Ontario College of Family Physicians. 2000. Available at: <http://www.ocfp.on.ca/english/ocfp/communications/publications/default.asp?s=1>. Accessed October 12, 2006.

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The Canadian Physiotherapy Association position statements address political, ethical and social issues that affect patient welfare, the role and practice of physiotherapy, the Association and its members.

equality underpinning the professional relationship where different health care professionals work collaboratively to provide the best possible care to their patient.

Collaborative practice is one that is patient centred.<sup>1</sup> It is described as “an inter-professional process for communication and decision-making that enables the separate and shared knowledge and skills of care providers to synergistically influence the patient care provided.”<sup>4</sup> Collaborative practice encourages the “active participation of each discipline in patient care” and “enhances patient and family centred goals and values.”<sup>1</sup>

Inter-professional, collaborative, patient-centred practice benefits both patients and health care providers.<sup>5</sup> It has a positive impact on:

- Population health and patient care
- Access and wait times
- Communication, coordination of care and patient safety
- Recruitment and retention of health care professionals
- Satisfaction among patients and health care professionals
- Health human resources<sup>1,3</sup>

A significant research base supports the benefits of inter-professional collaborative practice for patients with chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, for patients with mental health conditions, such as depression, and for geriatric patient populations.<sup>3</sup>

## THE ROLE OF PHYSIOTHERAPY IN INTER-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

Physiotherapists:

- Develop an understanding of and respect for the contributions of other health care professions and disciplines through inter-professional experiences at the entry-to-practice level<sup>6</sup>
- Develop and maintain the competencies required for effective inter-professional collaboration throughout their professional careers
- Engage in inter-professional collaborative partnerships, to share their experiences and serve as mentors to others by exploring and seizing opportunities to participate
- Evaluate and share best practices
- Advocate for their role as key contributing members to inter-professional collaborative health care teams

## CONCLUSION

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) is committed to advancing the contribution and the role of the physiotherapist in inter-professional collaborative practice to provide Canadians access to needed health

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<sup>5</sup> Health Canada. Interprofessional education for collaborative patient-centred practice. Available at: [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/hhrrhs/strateg/interprof/index\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/hhrrhs/strateg/interprof/index_e.html). Accessed October 12, 2006.

services. CPA will continue to promote inter-professional collaboration through leadership and advocacy at policy levels, by example and by supporting the development of appropriate change-management strategies.

For additional information on the role of the physiotherapist in inter-professional collaborative practice, please refer to the CPA's position statement on Primary Health Care.

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