



Canadian  
Physiotherapy  
Association

Association  
canadienne de  
physiothérapie

## Position Statement

# Rehabilitation in Healthy, Aging Canadians: The Role of Physiotherapy Position

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) believes that regular mobility and exercise are vital in maintaining good health for aging Canadians. However, some Canadians require the more specialized rehabilitation that physiotherapists, with their expertise in exercise, aging and disease, can provide. It is the position of CPA that to achieve their optimal independence and quality of life, aging Canadians require access to high quality, patient and family-centred physiotherapy care as close to home as possible. CPA believes that physiotherapy has effective solutions for home and community care and needs to be integrated into any national strategy for aging Canadians.

## BACKGROUND

Currently, seniors comprise approximately 15% of the Canadian population, consuming 45% of public health dollars. By 2036, those over 65 will make up 25% of the population, and utilize a staggering 62% of health budgets.

With continual rising health care costs and an increased focus on maximizing efficiencies in health service delivery there is a desire to realign services and move away from costly institutional care ('dehospitalize') for aging patients. The CPA sees this as an appropriate response to health needs as it is generally recognized that acute care institutions are not the most appropriate places to provide care for senior Canadians. However, not all of the services required to support successful return to independent living in community and residential settings are currently in place.

CPA acknowledges the health care system, as it stands today, is not adequate to meet the needs of this shifting demographic. The traditional distribution of physiotherapy across the sectors is not the ideal mix to support the trend of dehospitalization. CPA and its components must work together to advocate for the appropriate mix of prevention, hospital, community and home-care physiotherapy services.

Equitable access to physiotherapy, especially in rural and remote communities, is essential.

In addition to the right mix of services, CPA and its components must also advocate for physiotherapists and physiotherapist assistants to work to their full scope of practice, both in traditional settings and in settings where physiotherapy care has not been provided in the past (emerging roles). Interprofessional teams will be crucial in providing the accessible, patient-centered, quality, cost effective care required by our aging population.

## KEY MESSAGE

In 2015, CPA joined the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) and 69 other organizations calling on the federal government to develop a national *Seniors Strategy*. As part of this advocacy campaign the CMA has identified six sectors along the continuum of care for Aging Canadians: Wellness and Prevention, Primary Care, Home Care and Community Support, Acute and Specialty Care, Long-Term Care, and

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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.

Palliative Care. Physiotherapy has evidence-based, cost effective solutions available to address the needs of aging Canadians in each of these sectors.

CPA supports the policy framework created by the CMA, and will work collaboratively to foster strategic partnerships and build an interprofessional National *Seniors Strategy*. CPA will work with its components to build a physiotherapy-focused *Strategy for Aging Canadians* that supports the work done by the larger group.

Across all professions, Canada's healthcare system does not have enough providers with specialized training in geriatrics and palliative care. CPA, in collaboration with its Divisions, will ensure quality professional development programs are available to our members, through a variety of platforms.

## CONCLUSION

Canada's changing demographic presents a significant challenge to the existing health care system. CPA believes that physiotherapists and physiotherapist assistants have effective and efficient solutions to address the needs of aging Canadians, and can help build a sustainable health care system. CPA and its components support the trend of dehospitalization and will advocate for the inclusion of physiotherapists and physiotherapist assistants on all health care teams that provide care to Canada's aging population, including home and community care teams. CPA will continue to support the call for an interdisciplinary National Seniors' Strategy.

### National Office

Canadian Physiotherapy Association  
955 Green Valley Crescent, Suite 270  
Ottawa, ON K2C 3V4  
T: 613-564-5454  
TF: 1-800-387-8679  
F: 564-1577  
[www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca)