



Canadian
Physiotherapy
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May 8, 2020

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dr. Theresa Tam
Chief Public Health Officer
Public Health Agency of Canada
785 Carling Avenue
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

RE: Protecting Canada's health care workers during COVID-19 response and recovery

Dear Minister Hajdu and Dr. Tam,

On behalf of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA), which represents 15,000 physiotherapy professionals and students across Canada, I would like to thank the Government of Canada for its rapid and multifaceted response to address the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on Canadians. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the funding and efforts to support procurement and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to healthcare workers to ensure they have the equipment necessary to safely respond to patients during the pandemic. Access to PPE is one of the chief concerns CPA is hearing from members, and requires additional procurement efforts from all levels of government as provinces begin to implement plans to lift public health distancing measures and physiotherapists return to providing in person co-located care in community settings.

As healthcare professionals who provide crucial care and treatment to Canadians enabling them to stay mobile, healthy and active, physiotherapists are expecting to see significant increases in demand as our communities recover from COVID-19 and from the impacts of reduced physical activity due to quarantine, isolation and physical restrictions. As elective surgeries resume and patients resume treatment plans to manage pain, the demands for rehabilitation will increase further, placing additional pressure on physiotherapy services. Ensuring that physiotherapy services are available to support our communities as we begin to recover from the pandemic is essential. As regulated health professionals, physiotherapists have a fundamental ethical responsibility to take all reasonable steps to protect their patients from harm, and to practice in a safe, competent, accountable and responsible manner during the provision of services. In the context of COVID-19, this means taking all possible steps to reduce the risk of transmission, including the use of appropriate PPE.

In provinces that have begun efforts to reopen parts of their economies, access to PPE is a significant barrier for physiotherapists to return to their practices and support the recovery phase of the outbreak.



We're hearing of several challenges that members are facing in procuring PPE:

- First, due to scarcity of supplies, many vendors are only taking orders from existing clients and in large quantities (ie. 20,000 units of gloves or masks).
- Second, the market for non-authorized PPE is growing rapidly, which may result in counterfeit and sub-standard products being used when recommended PPE cannot be accessed.
- Third, the available supplies of PPE are being sold at significant mark-ups. For example, an item which would have previously been sold in units of 50 for under ten dollars is now being sold for between \$70-150. At these prices, the PPE required to keep physiotherapists and their patients safe during the provision of care is unattainable by many smaller or independent clinics, home care providers and sole-proprietors.

This situation stands to limit access to essential health care services for many in our communities who rely on physiotherapy to be mobile, recover from injury and manage pain.

The CPA continues to work with a number of businesses and stakeholders within the physiotherapy community to establish and maintain a reliable list of vendors through which to source PPE for members. As well, in partnership with OrthoCanada, we provided CPA members with priority access to a supply of sanitizing wipes, face shields, face masks and hand sanitizer. Our offer, which was developed to be available exclusively to members for 48 hours, had strict limits on quantities that each member could purchase. There was such a great demand however, that the supply sold out within the first 6 hours. The CPA is actively working with OrthoCanada and other partners and suppliers to access additional PPE stock, but we are seeking additional support in securing access to PPE supplies for community practitioners.

Fundamentally, access to PPE is a public safety issue. While we recognize that Pan-Canadian efforts are underway to coordinate and enhance the supply of PPE, we encourage you to take steps to ensure physiotherapists working in all health care settings have access to appropriate PPE that meets guidelines established to safely provide care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Physiotherapists are an integral part of our health care system, provide an essential service, and they play a key role in protecting, maintaining and improving the health and wellbeing of patients.

We look forward to continuing to support the government in its efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic and welcome any opportunities to contribute to its decisions and actions. Please contact us with any questions or if we can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

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