

Standards of Practice

Informed Consent

Standard

The physiotherapist obtains clients' ongoing informed consent for the delivery of physiotherapy services.

Expected outcomes

Clients can expect that they will be informed of the options, risks, and benefits of proposed physiotherapy services, asked to provide their consent, and that the physiotherapist will respect their right to question, refuse options, rescind consent, and/or withdraw from services at any time.

Performance expectations

The physiotherapist:

- Explains to clients the risks and benefits of physiotherapy assessment and treatment options, and the consequences of participating or not in the proposed assessment or treatment. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Seeking to understand the client's perspective, concerns, values, and goals.
 - Adapting the approach to the consent discussion according to the client's needs.
 - Providing treatment option(s) to address the client's needs.
 - Disclosing **material** and **special risks** relevant to the client's perspective, concerns, values, and goals.
 - Facilitating and answering the client's questions.
 - Making a reasonable effort to ensure the client understands the risks and benefits of the proposed assessment and treatment.
- Obtains the client's consent following a discussion of the proposed assessment or treatment and prior to the assessment, treatment, or provision of a plan of care.
- Obtains informed consent from the client in writing or verbally, in a manner reasonable and consistent with the frequency, nature, and severity of rare and common risks of the proposed physiotherapy services.
- Documents that consent was obtained and relevant details of the consent process reasonable for the clinical situation.
- Re-establishes and documents consent in instances where treatment plans change.
- Respects the autonomy of clients to question, decline options, refuse, rescind consent, and/or withdraw from physiotherapy services at any time.

- Obtains informed consent from the appropriate individual, according to applicable legislation and regulatory requirements, in cases when clients are incompetent, incapacitated, and/or unable to provide consent.
- Acts in accordance with ethical principles of **beneficence** and least harm in instances where urgent or emergent care is required for a client who is incompetent, incapacitated, and/or unable to provide consent, if consent cannot be obtained from the appropriate alternate decision-maker.
- In situations of physiotherapy research, obtains informed consent from clients prior to their participation in studies consistent with the requirements of the appropriate research ethics authority.

Beneficence is the ethical principle of doing what is good with respect to the welfare of the client. The physiotherapist should provide benefit to the client's health.

Material Risk includes risks that occur frequently as well as those that are rare but very serious, such as death or permanent disability.

Special Risk is a risk or risks that are particularly relevant to the specific client, when typically these may not be seen as material. Consent discussion and requirements extend to what the physiotherapist knows or ought reasonably know their client would deem relevant to making a decision about whether or not to undergo a treatment.

Related Standards

- Assessment, Diagnosis, Treatment
- Communication