

Standards of Practice

Duty of Care

Standard

The physiotherapist has a duty of care to their clients and an obligation to provide for continuity of care whenever a therapeutic relationship with a client has been established.

Expected outcome

Clients can expect that their interests will be the primary consideration when receiving physiotherapy services and that they will be provided with the information needed to manage their physiotherapy needs and to access ongoing care if their physiotherapist is unavailable or unable to continue the therapeutic relationship.

Performance expectations

The physiotherapist:

- Takes responsibility for maintaining an effective therapeutic relationship.
- Facilitates shared decision-making by taking the time to provide education regarding the client's condition, supporting health literacy and facilitating the transition to self-management.
- Does not provide a physiotherapy service when the client's condition indicates that commencing or continuing the physiotherapy service is not warranted or is contraindicated.
- Recognizes that clients have the right to make informed decisions about their own care, even when the physiotherapist believes the decisions may put the client's health at risk.
- Does not allow their personal judgments about a client, the client's lifestyle, or health choices to compromise the client's physiotherapy care. The physiotherapist does not withdraw or refuse to provide care due to the physiotherapist's judgments about a client, the client's lifestyle, or health choices.
- Employs respectful conflict resolution strategies when conflict arises.
- Makes appropriate arrangements for continuity of care during planned absences and when leaving a practice setting.
- When discharging a client in need of ongoing care, the physiotherapist:
 - Must not abandon clients.
 - Must document their reasons for discontinuing care.
 - Must advise the client of their decision to discontinue care and rationale.
- Ensures continuity of care, making appropriate arrangements for transfer of care to another physiotherapist or providing the client with information regarding other physiotherapy service options.
- Provides care until transfer to another physiotherapist can be arranged or provides a reasonable opportunity for the client to arrange alternate physiotherapy services.
- May discharge a client without providing for continuity of care if:
 - The client poses a safety risk to the physiotherapist or others within the practice setting
 - The client is abusive (physically, verbally, emotionally, or sexually) towards the physiotherapist or others within the practice setting.

Related Standards

- Assessment, Diagnosis, Treatment
- Communication
- Informed Consent