



HEALTH PROFESSIONS LICENSING AUTHORITY	
TITLE: Guidelines for Professional Conduct	
EFFECTIVE DATE: June 2004	REVIEW DATE: March 2007, February 2009
NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW: February 2012	
BOARD: Physiotherapists Board of the Northern Territory	

Purpose

The “*Guidelines for Professional Conduct*” have been developed by the Physiotherapists Board of the Northern Territory as the basis for ethical and professional conduct that meets community expectations and justifies community trust in the judgement and integrity of physiotherapists.

The “*Guidelines for Professional Conduct*” will be reviewed regularly to reflect the changing expectations of physiotherapists and the Australian community.

Definition

Physiotherapy is a holistic approach to the prevention, diagnosis and therapeutic management of disorders of movement or optimisation of function, to enhance the health and welfare of the community from an individual or population perspective. The practice of physiotherapy encompasses a diversity of clinical specialities to meet the unique needs of different client groups.

Ethical Principles

The following four ethical principles underpin the “*Guidelines for Professional Conduct*”. Physiotherapists shall:

- (i) Respect the autonomy of the individual
- (ii) Cause no harm
- (iii) Advance the common good
- (iv) Act fairly

Guidelines for Professional Conduct

Physiotherapists working in the Northern Territory shall uphold the following and conduct their practice accordingly:

- 1 Physiotherapists shall respect the rights and dignity of all individuals.
- 2 Physiotherapists shall comply with the laws and regulations governing the practice of physiotherapy in the Northern Territory.
- 3 Physiotherapists shall define their scope of practice according to current knowledge and competency standards, shall practise in a careful, honest and accountable manner and shall accept responsibility for the exercise of sound judgement.
- 4 Physiotherapists shall strive for standards of excellence in all aspects of physiotherapy practice, education, research and promotion.
- 5 Physiotherapists shall respect the confidentiality and security of client information.

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- 6 Physiotherapists shall provide accurate information about physiotherapy to clients and the general community.
 - 7 Physiotherapists shall communicate and co-operate with colleagues and other health care providers and agencies in the best interests of their clients and the community.
 - 8 Physiotherapists shall contribute to the development and implementation of health services that enhance the health status of the community.

Interpretation of the “Guidelines for Professional Conduct.”

The following interpretations, this is not an exhaustive list, have been provided to assist physiotherapists to practically interpret the guidelines thereby being able to understand them and uphold the guidelines.

1. Physiotherapists shall respect the rights and dignity of all individuals.

- Clients shall not be denied the right to physiotherapy on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, creed or health status.
- Clients have the right to have individual feelings and cultural customs respected.
- Clients have the right to privacy.
- Clients have the right to participate in decisions about their physiotherapy care.
- Clients have the right to obtain a second opinion and to cease physiotherapy.
- Clients have the right to discuss concerns and to have complaints managed sensitively and appropriately.
- Clients have the right to expect that relationships with their treating physiotherapists will be based on confidence and trust.
- Physiotherapists shall not engage in any sexual activity with a person who is a client.

2. Physiotherapists shall comply with the laws and regulations governing the practice of physiotherapy in the Northern Territory.

- Physiotherapists shall have a full understanding of all the laws and regulations relevant to the practice of physiotherapy, for example Health Practitioners and Allied Professionals Registration Act, Motor Vehicle Act, Trade Practices Act, Anti-discrimination Act, and the Health and Community Services Complaints Commission Act.

3. Physiotherapists shall define their scope of practice according to current knowledge and competency standards, shall practise in a careful, honest and accountable manner and shall accept responsibility for the exercise of sound judgement.

- Clients have the right to benefit from physiotherapy that is designed to meet their unique needs.
- Clients have the right to be referred to more suitably qualified practitioners.
- Clients have the right to be protected from inappropriate servicing.
- Physiotherapists are responsible and accountable for their provision of physiotherapy services and for the relevant knowledge and competence that such services require.
- Physiotherapists shall ensure that their practice is conducted in a safe manner, that contra-indications are observed, that safety tests are undertaken and recorded, and that equipment meets health and safety requirements.

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- Physiotherapists shall not delegate any activity that requires the unique skill, knowledge and judgement of a physiotherapist.
 - Physiotherapists shall accept responsibility for all treatment provided by others acting under their supervision.
 - Physiotherapists shall, when teaching physiotherapy skills to others, ensure that they do not undermine the practice or professional standards of physiotherapy.
 - Physiotherapists shall keep confidential records for every client to allow for the effective evaluation of the client's progress and the physiotherapist's practice.
 - Physiotherapists have the right to refuse to provide a service where there are reasonable grounds for doing so especially when, in their opinion, it is not in the best interests of the client.
 - Physiotherapists shall have adequate personal professional indemnity insurance.

4. Physiotherapists shall strive for standards of excellence in all aspects of physiotherapy practice, education, research and promotion.

- Physiotherapists shall be aware of and measure their conformance with currently accepted standards of practice.
- Physiotherapists shall participate in continuing professional development to enhance their basic skills and knowledge and to generate new knowledge.
- Physiotherapists shall support research, including the measurement and evaluation of the outcomes of physiotherapy treatment, which contributes to improved client care.
- Physiotherapists shall support high quality education in academic and clinical settings.
- Physiotherapists engaged in research shall abide by the accepted rules governing the ethical conduct of research and shall share their learning, especially in journals and conference presentations.
- Physiotherapists shall participate in peer review and other forms of practice evaluation for the purpose of continuous quality improvement and shall have the right to limit the disclosure of related information.
- Physiotherapists shall not condone or associate with any unethical practice.

5. Physiotherapists shall respect the confidentiality and security of client information.

- Clients have the right to confidentiality and this right shall encompass all client information including attendance for treatment.
- Physiotherapists shall ensure that all staff under their supervision also respect client confidentiality.
- Physiotherapists shall keep a confidential record for every client which is complete, legible, understandable and held securely for at least the period required by law.
- Physiotherapists shall not disclose any information about a client to a third party without the client's permission, unless such disclosure is required by law.

6. Physiotherapists shall provide accurate information about physiotherapy to clients and the general community.

- Clients have the right to appropriate, objective, truthful and understandable information about their condition and about proposed physiotherapy procedures and programs, including expected

benefits, perceived risks, alternatives, costs and fees, to enable an informed consent to be given or withheld.

- Where a client is unable to give effective consent to treatment, information shall be supplied to and consent obtained from an appropriate person acting on behalf of the client.
- Physiotherapists shall use only titles which correctly describe their professional status or expertise.

7. Physiotherapists shall communicate and co-operate with colleagues and other health care providers and agencies in the best interests of their clients and the community.

- Clients have the right to expect that physiotherapists will communicate appropriately with professional colleagues and other relevant persons or agencies, to maximise the benefits of physiotherapy services provided.
- Clients have the right to be referred to more suitable qualified practitioners whenever that course is clinically appropriate.
- Physiotherapists shall respect client privacy during the exchange of client information within multi-disciplinary teams.
- Physiotherapists have the right to expect co-operation from their colleagues.
- Physiotherapists shall not engage in public criticism of professional colleagues unless such public discourse is in the best interests of their clients or the community.
- Physiotherapists who have evidence of unethical behaviour by professional colleagues are expected to bring such evidence to the attention of the Physiotherapists Board of the Northern Territory.
- If a person who employs a health practitioner terminates or suspends the health practitioners employment because of alleged or actual misconduct or incompetence to practise, the person must provide a written report of the circumstances of the termination or suspension to the relevant board of the Northern Territory and to the health practitioner.

8. Physiotherapists shall contribute to the development and implementation of health services that enhance the health status of the community.

- Physiotherapists shall participate in the planning and implementation of services designed to provide optimum health care for the community.
- Physiotherapists shall work towards achieving justice in the provision of health care for all people.
- Physiotherapists shall participate in the ongoing measurement and evaluation of the outcomes of physiotherapy treatment.
- The physiotherapy profession shall encourage the innovative extension of its scope of practice provided such development is based on evidence of efficacy and safety.

Acknowledgment

The Physiotherapists Board of the Northern Territory recognises the *Australian Physiotherapy Association's Code of Conduct*, which served to inform this guideline.

For further information regarding practising as a Physiotherapist in the Northern Territory go to website www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards click on Physiotherapists Board in the menu.