



Guiding Principles on Physiotherapy Regulation

Preamble

These guiding principles on physiotherapy regulation have been developed to provide guidance both to regulatory authorities that are already established and, in particular to those countries where physiotherapy regulation is developing or has not yet been developed. The principles provide suggested direction for specific areas that should be addressed in a regulatory model for physiotherapy. While not all the principles may be feasible or appropriate at a specific time within a particular jurisdiction, they provide guidance for future change. The principles also provide the foundation for the collection of data, evidence and resources related to each of the principles.

There are many models for regulating the practice of physiotherapy. INPTRA does not recommend one particular model but does recommend that in all countries, there is some assurance to the public that the professional has met educational, ethical and practice standards. If this assurance is achieved through a formal process of regulation (for example, legislation), the model for regulation should encompass the principles discussed below.

1) The purpose of regulation

- a) The primary purpose of regulation is to protect the public and provide it with assurance that a physiotherapist is suitably qualified and competent to provide safe care that meets appropriate regulatory standards.
- b) In some countries, regulation also encompasses other objectives, including:
 - i) the accreditation of programs of physiotherapy study
 - ii) the assessment of physiotherapists educated outside the country or physiotherapy programs located in other countries
 - iii) the facilitation of physiotherapy workforce mobility
 - iv) the promotion of access to physiotherapists by the public.
- c) Regulation upholds physiotherapy professional standards and maintains the reputation of, and the public confidence in, the profession. It should not be focused on protecting or representing the interests of individual physiotherapists or the physiotherapy profession.
- d) Regulation provides a mechanism through which necessary action can be taken to protect the public in response to concerns about the practice of physiotherapists. This may arise through a range of causative factors including their health, performance, conduct or qualifications. Regulatory decisions about physiotherapists may appear to be punitive; however, they are always taken from the point of view of protecting the public and upholding the standards of the profession. In some cases it involves deciding whether the practitioner in question must forfeit the right to enjoy some or all of the benefits and privileges that come with registration (licensure).



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2) All regulatory authorities should abide by principles that affect public protection including:

- a) Standards should assure that a person is competent to enter the profession through quality education and training.
- b) The regulatory authority should have mechanisms to assure that the individual physiotherapist has the requisite knowledge and skills to practice safely and competently such as exam, audits, annual declarations or other mechanisms. This could be achieved through regular monitoring of education providers and programs to ensure that best practice education approaches are engaged, and quality standards are met.
- c) The chosen regulatory model should ensure that individuals who do not meet the requisite standards do not misrepresent themselves as physiotherapists (term and title protection).

3) Demonstration of competency through the physiotherapist's career

- a) Regulatory models should include a requirement to demonstrate and maintain competency through the physiotherapist's career and not focus only on entry to the profession.
- b) The profession of physical therapy changes as new technology, techniques and evidence continue to develop. In order to maintain competency, a physiotherapist must stay abreast of these changes and incorporate them as appropriate in practice.
- c) Any regulatory model should provide an effective and reliable process for the registrant (licensee) to demonstrate competency.
- d) Self-reflection and life-long learning (continuous professional development) are important components of ongoing competency and should be incorporated into any given model.

4) Establishment of standards of practice

These standards of practice should apply to most practice situations. However, it should be recognized that there may be some practice situations where not all of these apply such as community health and wellness and prevention.

- a) Definition of what physiotherapy is and guidance on scope of practice
- b) Clear standards for the safe delivery of care including
 - i) Patient examination
 - (1) History
 - (2) Systems review
 - (3) Etc.
 - ii) Evaluation and assessment
 - (1) Diagnosis (not allowed in all countries but core to the profession)
 - (2) Prognosis
 - iii) Establishment of treatment plan



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- iv) Implementation of treatment in a safe and effective manner
 - v) Ongoing examination and evaluation
 - vi) Discharge planning
 - vii) Documentation and appropriate billing
 - viii) Effective communication
 - ix) Demonstration of professional behavior appropriate to physical therapy conduct (for example, ethical standards)
- 5) Establishment of a mechanism to effectively deal with individuals who do not comply with the established standards of practice**
- a) Mechanisms for identification of practitioners who do not comply with established standards
 - b) An investigative process
 - c) A system for a fair hearing in accordance with due process, with opportunity to appeal decisions
 - d) Resolution should include the ability to remove from practising physiotherapy those individuals who are a threat to public safety or who no longer meet minimum standards of professional competency
- 6) Regulatory solutions should be implemented to the minimum degree necessary to ensure the protection of the public.**
- Interventions should be proportionate to the assessed risk of harm to the public. They should not impede competent practice by qualified individuals or unnecessarily restrict opportunities to appropriately engage in advanced scopes of practice.
- 7) Systems of regulation should not unnecessarily hinder the mobility of physiotherapists.**
- Regulatory systems should be responsive to local jurisdictional requirements in facilitating appropriate access to and development of the physiotherapy workforce, balancing these with issues related to the global supply and distribution of health professionals and the global burden of disease.
- 8) Systems of regulation should be based on current best evidence and best practice**
- Regulatory systems should seek to continuously improve and align their structures and processes with contemporary approaches to regulation, using the best available data and evidence as a basis for change.