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Mr. Paul Shinkfield/ Mr. William Hatherill/ Ms. Katya Masnyk  
INPTRA Board Members

11 August 2015

Dear Messrs Shinkfield and Shinfield and Ms. Masnyk

**RE: Protection of Title of Physical Therapist in Republic of Ireland**

I am writing to draw the attention of the Board of INPTRA to an ongoing issue of significant public health safety concern in Ireland – the need to protect the title of physical therapist in addition to the title of physiotherapist when state regulation of the profession is introduced in the near future.

Currently neither title is protected in law in Ireland. The Health and Social Care Act (2005) provides for the protection of the title of physiotherapist only and this law will be enacted when the Register opens in 2016. The Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (ISCP), the professional body for the profession in Ireland and the sole body recognised in Ireland by the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), has been advocating for the protection also of the physical therapist title as both titles are synonymous and inter-changeable worldwide with the exception of Ireland, and its omission will lead to significant public safety risks both within Ireland and also potentially in other countries in the event of applications for recognition of qualifications by Irish trained “physical therapists”.

In Ireland, in the absence of protection of the title, a number of educational facilities provide part-time courses of varying duration (6 months, 15 months and 3 years for the largest of these) in solely the musculoskeletal area to persons who, upon qualification, practice using the title of “physical therapist”. There is absolutely no education provided in the neurological or cardio-respiratory core areas that a physiotherapist would receive. The Society has a large case file of instances where public confusion has arisen regarding the use of the “physical therapist” title in Ireland and has been advocating for its protection for over 30 years.

The Irish Minister for Health, Mr. Leo Varadkar, is currently consulting with eight organisations, including the ISCP, prior to reaching a final decision on a proposal to protect the title of “physical therapist”. We understand that



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advice he is receiving points to potential legal and political implications should he also protect this title as proposed.

The ISCP would very much welcome the support of INPTRA on this issue. We request that INPTRA write to Minister Varadkar to support the proposal to protect the title of physical therapist as outlined in his letter to the eight organisations dated 17 June 2015, and to alert the Minister to the additional difficulties and risks that non-protection would present within the international regulatory environment.

I attach for your information copies of correspondence from the Minister in June and July 2015, together with other consultative correspondence between the Minister and the Physiotherapists Registration Board released by the Minister to all eight organisations. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information or clarification.

Yours sincerely,



Ruaidhri O'Connor

Chief Executive Officer

Attachments:

1. Letter from Minister for Health, Leo Varadkar, to ISCP, 17 June 2015
2. Letter from Minister for Health, Leo Varadkar, to ISCP, 14 July 2015
3. Letter from Minister for Health, Leo Varadkar, to Physiotherapists Registration Board, 29 October 2014
4. Report to Minister for Health, Leo Varadkar, from Physiotherapists Registration Board, 27 February 2015

