



August 19, 2015

Mr. Leo Varadkar, T.D.
Irish Minister for Health
Department of Health
Hawkins House
Dublin 2
IRELAND

Dear Minister Varadkar:

The International Network of Physiotherapy Regulatory Authorities (INPTRA) is an association of physiotherapy regulatory authorities from around the globe. The purpose of INPTRA is to provide a forum for existing and emerging physiotherapy regulatory authorities and other related organizations, to participate in exploring and furthering understanding of regulatory systems, issues and opportunities around the world, and to facilitate international cooperation and collaboration on issues of mutual interest.

The INPTRA Board was pleased to learn that the Health and Social Care Act (2005) providing for the protection of the title of physiotherapist will be enacted in 2016. However, the Board was concerned that the term “physical therapist” was not also a protected term. While we understand that in Ireland, physical therapists have a different level of education and a different role than physiotherapists, the term is used synonymously throughout the rest of the world. From INPTRA’s perspective, the terms are the same - physical therapist is used more in the United States and physiotherapist is used more throughout most of the rest of the world.

Within INPTRA’s Guiding Principles on Physiotherapy Regulation¹, is Principle 2:

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

- 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).*

While this principle doesn’t specifically mention the term “physical therapy,” it is assumed that this term should also be protected since the terms are synonymous throughout most of the world.

¹<http://inpra.org/Home/RegulatoryInformation.aspx>

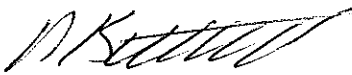
In fact, regulations in countries typically protect both terms. For example, the United Kingdom², Canada³, New Zealand⁴, Australia⁵ and most states in the United States⁶ all protect both terms.

A great example of how these terms are used interchangeably comes from the University of Toronto's Master of Science in Physical Therapy webpage. In describing the program, the site indicates that, "Graduates will be eligible to write the Physiotherapy Competency Examination of the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulatory Boards, which qualifies them to practice physical therapy in Canada."⁷

As global health and mobility of healthcare workers becomes a reality, INPTRA believes that some standardization of terms and terminology has merit in terms of protecting the public and avoiding confusion. Given that these two terms are globally used to represent one profession, attempts to differentiate them as two different occupations in Ireland may confuse your citizens and will certainly confuse the international population.

In summary, INPTRA applauds the efforts of the Ministry to protect the term physiotherapy and encourages the additional step of protecting the term physical therapy as an interchangeable term. We believe this will enhance Ireland's regulatory scheme and benefit both the public and the physiotherapists and physical therapists in Ireland.

Sincerely,



William A. Hatherill, Chair
INPTRA Board of Directors

² <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/protectedtitles/>

³ <http://www.collegept.org/Physiotherapists/UnregulatedPractitioners>

⁴ <http://www.physioboard.org.nz/position-statements>

⁵ www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au/documents/default.aspx?record=WD11%2F6748&dbid=AP&checksum=jZFLguLrol
eUq...

⁶ <https://www.fsbpt.org/FreeResources/RegulatoryResources/ModelPracticeAct.aspx>

⁷ <http://www.physicaltherapy.utoronto.ca/about/our-programs>