

# Non Physiotherapists Use of Restricted Titles and Holding Out

Physiotherapy is a regulated profession in Ontario. Individuals must be registered with the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario to use the restricted title of physiotherapist. No one other than a registered physiotherapist can lawfully call themselves a physiotherapist or physical therapist<sup>1</sup>.

The Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA) and the Physiotherapy Act are the laws that define who can use the title physiotherapist, physical therapist, and any variations or abbreviations of these titles (e.g. PT). This includes their use in other languages.

Further, the law does not permit non registered persons to hold themselves out as a physiotherapist. This means an individual cannot imply or suggest they are a registered physiotherapist or physical therapist when they are not.

In circumstances where a registered physiotherapist assists any person not registered with the College to hold himself or herself out, this behavior is considered professional misconduct. Registered physiotherapists must report to the College the name of a person who is not registered with the College and believed to be holding themselves out. Failure to do so can also be considered professional misconduct.

The College of Physiotherapists of Ontario takes seriously all claims of misuse of titles or of persons holding themselves out to be a registered physiotherapist or physical therapist. All substantiated reports of this nature are investigated and action is taken where appropriate. A number of remedies are available to the College to enforce compliance with the law.

These remedies include:

- Education
- Cease and desist notifications
- Application for a court injunction, and
- Prosecution for committing an offence

Findings of guilt in a prosecution may result in a fine of up to \$25,000 for a first offence and up to \$50,000 for a subsequent offence.

Physiotherapist titles are also official marks. Official marks are words that have been registered with the Canadian Intellectual Property Office through the federal Trade-marks Act. The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (The Alliance) has the authority for the use of official marks throughout Canada. The official marks for the profession at the national level include practice words (e.g. physiotherapy and physical therapy) and title words (e.g. physical therapist, physiotherapist and PT)<sup>2</sup>

1 Whenever “physiotherapist” is used, the reader can also include the title “physical therapist”  
2 Official marks statement, Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, February 2010, web link; [http://www.alliancept.org/pdfs/alliance\\_resources\\_official\\_marks\\_eng.pdf](http://www.alliancept.org/pdfs/alliance_resources_official_marks_eng.pdf)

## Definition

**Holding out:** When the conduct of the person is such that a reasonable member of the public would infer that the person is qualified to practice as a physiotherapist in Ontario. A person who conveys the sense that he/she is a member of the profession, when he/she is not, may be considered to be “holding out”.

For further information, please refer to the Inappropriate Use of Title and Holding Out information under the Professional Conduct section of the College’s website [www.collegept.org](http://www.collegept.org).

## References

- Statutes of Ontario. “Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991”.
- Statutes of Ontario. “Physiotherapy Act, 1991”.
- Ontario Regulation 532/98, General: Part III. Registration
- Ontario Regulation 388/08, Professional Misconduct
- Official Marks Statement – Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators