

Considerations When Taking Political or Job Action

Members of a profession have a vested interest in influencing policy and policy-setters, and therefore have a political element. Political action by a profession focuses primarily on advocating for the profession and the interests of the individual practitioner. Often the interests of the public and the interests of the profession are similar. At other times, they may be quite different. Physiotherapists/physical therapists* have the fundamental right to take action on issues that they believe should be influenced or changed. Action may be collective or individual in nature, but regardless, the individual physical therapist should always consider the impact on the patient-therapist relationship. There may be valid reasons to provide related information to patients. This information must be factual, and be provided in a balanced manner; allowing patients to make informed choices free of expectations or perceived obligations on the part of the patient.

Preserving the integrity of the therapeutic relationship is central to maintaining trust and the delivery of safe, quality and effective care. Physiotherapists have a professional obligation to always act in the best interests of the patient. Physical therapists should recognize that the power imbalance between therapist and patient may create a challenge when sharing information, particularly when the circumstance is emotionally charged.

Physiotherapists should not impose their particular views on a patient. They should not pressure a patient into taking action related to physiotherapy services. For example, asking a patient to sign a petition or to send a letter to funding sources may leave that patient feeling vulnerable and without option. A more appropriate action would be the provision of reading material or resource contacts so that the patient can make their own choice. A patient should not be placed in a situation that provokes fear of reprisal (for example, withdrawal of treatment) by the physiotherapist if he/she does not choose to support the action. Physical therapists should be mindful that some patients may experience fear of reprisal even where such an action would never be contemplated.

The College is confident that physiotherapists act professionally and competently at all times. Physiotherapists involved in professional interest advocacy should maintain the integrity of the therapeutic relationship and place patient needs first.

There are a number of resources available in the Registrants' Guide and on the College website – www.collegept.org – that provide more information on maintaining appropriate relationships with patients:

- **Standard for Professional Practice: Therapeutic Relationships and Professional Boundaries and Guide**
- **Standard for Professional Practice: Conflict of Interest and Guide**
- **E-learning Modules: Ethics and Boundaries**

You can also contact the College Practice Advisor for a confidential discussion at:
416-591-3828 ext. 241 • 1-800-583-5885 ext. 241 • practiceadvice@collegept.org

**The term physiotherapist and physical therapist are used interchangeably.*

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