

# The Use of Restricted Titles, Credentials and Specialty Designations

*College official documents contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all Ontario physiotherapists in the care of their patients and in the practice of the profession. College official documents are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College official documents may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained.*

## Introduction

According to the Physiotherapy Act, only registrants of the College are permitted to use the titles “physiotherapist” and “physical therapist”, variations and abbreviations thereof such as “PT”, or equivalent terms in other languages. The purpose of this legislation is to protect the public by ensuring appropriate and authorized use of these titles.

The ability to use of title is a privilege granted to registrants of a regulatory organization who have demonstrated that they possess the required educational qualifications, knowledge, skills and attributes to practice their profession. Registrants are accountable for the delivery of professional services and as such, a title of registration provides the public with important information.

Every physiotherapist/physical therapist who is registered with the College is entitled to use the protected titles associated with his or her class of certificate of registration. No one other than a College registrant is permitted to use the titles restricted by the Physiotherapy Act or to hold himself/herself out as a physiotherapist or physical therapist.

These restricted 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>1</sup>

Physiotherapists/physical therapists may also wish to use other credentials in combination with the restricted titles granted to them by the College. The College takes a national approach to the recognition of specialty designations and relies on the rigour of the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators’ specialty recognition review process when granting permission to use the title “specialist”.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 Official marks statement, Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, February 2010, [http://www.alliancept.org/pdfs/alliance\\_resources\\_official\\_marks\\_eng.pdf](http://www.alliancept.org/pdfs/alliance_resources_official_marks_eng.pdf)
- 2 Please see the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario’s Position Statement Specialty Designations

## Standard Statement

*In the event of any inconsistency between this standard and any legislation that governs the practice of physiotherapists, the legislation governs.*

Registrants, when engaging in physiotherapy clinical practice will use their restricted title associated with the certificate of registration they hold (see Appendix A). Title use is not permitted in any context in which a registrant is practicing outside the scope of practice of physiotherapy.

Registrants may use other credentials. When a registrant engages in physiotherapy clinical practice, this credential use will occur in conjunction with, and after the use of the restricted title. It is the restricted title that distinguishes physiotherapists/physical therapists from other health care providers and assists patients with understanding who is providing their care.

Registrants who use any additional credential(s) will present them accurately, honestly, and in accordance with any legal restrictions.<sup>3</sup>

## Performance Expectations

A registrant of the College demonstrates appropriate use of restricted titles by:

1. Using titles permitted by the Physiotherapy Act
  - a. “physiotherapist”
  - b. “physical therapist”,
  - c. variations and abbreviations of these term
  - d. equivalent terms in other languages
2. Only using the title associated with his/her certificate of registration (Appendix A).
3. Ensuring that the restricted title directly follows their name (e.g. Joan P. Jones, PT) when used in clinical practice.
4. Using other credentials in addition to their protected title, with the restricted title appearing first in order of reference.
5. Only using the title “doctor”<sup>4</sup> or its abbreviation (associated with a completed doctoral degree) in non clinical settings.
6. Only using specialty designations recognized by the College.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The College’s Professional Misconduct Regulation forbids registrants from using the title “specialist” unless a registrant holds a specialty designation recognized by the College.

<sup>4</sup> The Regulated Professions Act restricts the use of title “doctor”, in the context of providing or offering to provide health care to individuals in Ontario, to only those people who are registered with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Optometrists, Chiropractors, Psychologists and Dentists.

<sup>5</sup> The designations granted by the specialty certification programs recognized by The Alliance are the designations registrants are entitled to use in conjunction with the title “specialist”. A list of such designations is available from the College.

## Definitions

**Clinical Practice:** The provision of direct or indirect health care or advice to patients including any component of assessment, analysis of findings or provision of treatment to patients and the assignment of any portion of care to support personnel. This includes roles involving assessment, consultation or provision of treatment in schools, industry or fitness centres, occasional weekend or relief work or short term vacation coverage. Even an interaction with one patient per year falls within this definition.

**Credentials:** A general term for a variety of degrees, qualifications or designations, etc. granted by agencies including professional association, academic institutions, and educational bodies.

**Doctor:** An education credential associated with PhD. or doctor programs. The RHPA contains special provisions that govern the use of this education credential in the context of the health care environment (see footnote 4).

## References

- Regulated Health Professions Act, Section 33
- Physiotherapy Act, Section 8
- Ontario Regulation 532/98, General Part III, Registration
- Ontario Regulation 388/08, Professional Misconduct

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## Appendix A - Titles by Registration Category

### Independent Practice or Courtesy

1. Physiotherapists holding certificates of registration of Independent Practice or Courtesy Certificates of Registration will use any of the following restricted titles to indicate their registration with the College when they engage in physiotherapy clinical practice:
  - Physiotherapist
  - Physical therapist
  - The abbreviation “PT”
  - physiothérapeute
  - L’abréviation “pht”
  - A variation or equivalent of these titles in another language

### Provisional Practice

2. Physiotherapists holding Provisional Practice certificates of Registration will use any of the following restricted titles to indicate their registration with the College when they engage in physiotherapy clinical practice:
  - Physiotherapy-resident
  - PT-resident
  - Interne en physiothérapie
  - Interne-pht
  - a variation or equivalent of these titles in another language