

Standard for Professional Practice - Advertising

College publications 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 publications are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained.

Introduction

The evolution of physiotherapy practice now provides registrants with more opportunities to directly communicate the availability of their services to the public or other health care professionals.

In this context, the College supports registrants' use of appropriate advertising to communicate the type and availability of services to the public or other health professionals so that potential patients, clients and referral sources can make choices based on their respective needs.

This standard for Professional Practice describes the College's expectations for registrants involved in advertising of professional services. Because of the inter-relationship of various issues related to practice management (i.e. fees and billing, advertising, conflict of interest and maintaining financial records), it is advisable to review this standard in partnership with the Standards for Professional Practice: Fees & Billing, Conflict of Interest and Record Keeping.

Standard Statement

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

Registrants may use any public medium to advertise professional services offered within the scope of practice of physiotherapy to members of the public, or other health professionals, to assist them in making informed choices about the health care services provided by physiotherapists.

Registrants' advertisements will be accurate, verifiable, comprehensible, professionally appropriate and compliant with the standards of practice of the profession. Registrants will also take reasonable steps to ensure that advertisements placed by others (e.g. employers, facility operators etc.) about their services meet these standards.

Performance Expectations

A physiotherapist demonstrates the standard by ensuring that:

1. The information in advertisements is:
 - a. accurate,
 - b. true,
 - c. verifiable by the registrant,
 - d. is not misleading by either omitting relevant information or including non-relevant information, and
 - e. professional
2. The information contained in advertisements directed at a specific audience is:
 - a. comprehensible to its intended audience, and
 - b. in accordance with the generally accepted standards of good taste of its intended audience.
3. Any references to professional qualifications used in advertisements are consistent with the College's Standard for Professional Practice: Physiotherapists' Use of Restricted Titles and Credentials.
4. The content of every advertisement is consistent with the College's Position Statement on Specialty Designations.¹
5. The professional services offered by a registrant advertising in his or her capacity as a physiotherapist are within the scope of practice of physiotherapy.
6. Advertisements do not include anything that could be interpreted as intending to promote a demand for unnecessary services.
7. Advertisements do not contain any information that could be interpreted to be an endorsement of a physiotherapist or his or her practice from an individual or an organization.²
8. Any references to fees or prices used in advertisements meet the expectations for truth and accuracy described in this standard. This is not intended to prohibit a physiotherapist from:
 - a. displaying or distributing a fee schedule and/or an explanation of the way fees are calculated;
 - b. providing information about fees or charges in response to a request for this information;
 - c. providing information on the funding models or insurance plans for which he or she accepts patients; or
 - d. indicating the forms of payment he or she will accept.
9. Advertisements do not contain any statement that may be interpreted to be a:
 - a. Guarantee as to the success of the service provided;
 - b. Comparative or superlative statement about service quality, products or people;
 - c. Testimonial by any person who has obtained, or is related to or acquainted with, a person who has obtained products or services from the practice being advertised; or

¹ This is not intended to prohibit physiotherapists from providing information on areas of practice or procedures or treatments that they offer.

² This includes references to registrants' completion of the College's Quality Management program.

- d. Express or implied endorsement or recommendation for the exclusive use of a drug, product or brand of equipment used or sold in the practice.
10. He or she does not directly or indirectly solicit patients or clients in person, by telephone, e-mail, or any other means of communication that is not considered to be a public medium. This is not intended to prohibit a physiotherapist from:
 - a. undertaking activities that are considered to be reasonably necessary to carry out normal and required health care notices and reminders,
 - b. periodically contacting current or former patients or clients for goodwill purposes, or
 - c. providing information to prospective referral sources.
 11. His or her participation in the promotion or advertising of health care products or services is consistent with the College's Standard for Professional Practice: Conflict of Interest.

Definitions

Advertisement: Any message communicating information about a registrant's practice and/or the professional services he or she offers, the content of which he or she controls or influences, directly or indirectly, which is expressed in any language with the intent to influence choice, opinion or behaviour and communicated in any public medium to anyone.³

Public Medium: Any form of communication that, generally speaking, is equally available to anyone who chooses to use it and that is directed to the public, or a specific subsection of the public rather than to an individual person or persons. For example, radio, television, websites (but not individually targeted emails), flyers (provided they are distributed publicly and not individually targeted), and the yellow pages are all examples of public media.

References and Resources

Legislation

Physiotherapy Act, Sections 3, 4
Regulated Health Professions Act, Sections 27, 29

Other

Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada. July 2004
Advertising Standards of Canada

College Documents

Professional Misconduct Regulation - 388/08
Standard for Professional Practice: Fees & Billing
Standard for Professional Practice: Physiotherapists' Use of Restricted Titles and Credentials
Standard for Professional Practice: Conflict of Interest
Guide to the Standards for Professional Practice: Advertising, Fees & Billing, and Conflict of Interest
Position Statement: Specialty Designations