



Health Policy Implications for Physical Therapy

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Editorial Note

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association offers a curriculum of continuing education courses in orthopedics and manual therapy. The program consists of 5 levels (7 courses) of training with ongoing mentorship and evaluation at each level. The orthopedic curriculum and examinations take a minimum of 4 years to complete. However, upon completion of level 2, physiotherapists can apply to a unique 1-year course-based Master's program in advanced orthopedics and manipulation at the University of Western Ontario to complete their training. This program accepts only 16 physiotherapists annually since 2007. Successful completion of either of these education streams and their respective examinations allows physiotherapists the opportunity to apply to the Canadian Academy of Manipulative Physiotherapy (CAMPT) for fellowship. Fellows of the Canadian Academy of manipulative Physiotherapists (FCAMPT) are considered leaders in the field, having extensive post-graduate education in orthopedics and manual therapy. FCAMPT is an internationally recognized credential, as CAMPT is a member of the International Federation of Manipulative Physiotherapists (IFOMPT), a branch of the World Confederation of Physical Therapy (WCPT) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Effectiveness

Studies also show physical therapy is effective for patients with other conditions. A 2012 systematic review about the effectiveness of physiotherapy treatment in asthma patients concluded that physiotherapy treatment may improve quality of life, promote cardiopulmonary fitness and inspiratory pressure, as well as reduce symptoms and medication use. Physical therapy is sometimes provided to patients in the ICU, as early mobilization can help reduce ICU and hospital length of stay and improve long-term functional ability. A 2013 systematic review showed that early progressive mobilization for adult, intubated ICU patients on mechanical ventilation is safe and effective.

Orthopedic physical therapists diagnose, manage, and treat disorders and injuries of the musculoskeletal system including rehabilitation after orthopedic surgery. Acute trauma such as sprains, strains, injuries of insidious onset such as tendinopathy, bursitis, and deformities like scoliosis. This specialty of physical therapy is most often found in the outpatient clinical setting. Orthopedic therapists are trained in the treatment of post-operative orthopedic procedures, fractures, acute sports injuries, arthritis, sprains, strains, back and neck pain, spinal conditions, and amputations.

Cardiovascular and pulmonary rehabilitation respiratory practitioners and physical therapists offer therapy for a wide variety of cardiopulmonary disorders or pre and post cardiac or pulmonary surgery. An example of cardiac surgery is coronary bypass surgery. The primary goals of this specialty include increasing endurance and functional independence. Manual therapy is used in this field to assist in clearing lung secretions experienced with cystic fibrosis. Pulmonary disorders, heart attacks, post coronary bypass surgery, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and pulmonary fibrosis, treatments can benefit from cardiovascular and pulmonary specialized physical therapists.

Some jurisdictions allow physical therapists to employ technicians or aides or therapy assistants to perform designated routine tasks related to physical therapy under the direct supervision of a physical therapist. Some jurisdictions require physical therapy technicians or aides to be certified, and education and certification requirements vary among jurisdictions. Pediatric physical therapy assists in the early detection of health problems and uses a variety of modalities to provide physical therapy for disorders in the pediatric population. These therapists are specialized in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of infants, children, and adolescents with a variety of congenital, developmental, neuromuscular, skeletal, or acquired disorders/diseases. Treatments focus mainly on improving gross and fine motor skills, balance and coordination, strength and endurance as well as cognitive and sensory processing/integration.