

Physiotherapists

Physiotherapists are self-regulated health professionals whose work is primarily directed towards the prevention and alleviation of movement dysfunction in people. They plan and carry out individually designed physical treatment programs for the purpose of restoring function, and preventing or minimizing disability caused by disease, trauma, injury, aging and inactivity. Physiotherapists are also involved in consulting, educating individuals or groups, and research.

In the accomplishment of their job responsibilities, physiotherapists may perform activities and functions such as assessing physical and functional abilities in order to identify physiotherapeutic problems; developing intervention programs to address the physiotherapy problems; implementing programs of physiotherapy which may include patient education, individualized exercise programs, mobilization, the use of assistive/supportive devices and other physical approaches, such as electrotherapy and hydrotherapy; and maintaining clinical and statistical records.

Physiotherapists work in multidisciplinary teams and confer with other professionals as required. They develop and implement screening and preventive health promotion programs, conduct research in physiotherapy and perform other duties related to education, consultation or administration.

Physiotherapists may focus their practice in particular clinical areas such as orthopedics, cardiopulmonary and cardiovascular disorders, neurology, geriatrics, burns, sports injuries, rheumatology, oncology, pediatrics and obstetrics. They are able to work as *primary health care providers* in all provincial jurisdictions. Patients can make appointments with physiotherapists without being referred by a medical doctor. Physiotherapists work in a variety of settings including health clinics, hospitals, rehabilitation centres, and nursing homes. Many are self-employed.

Physiotherapy education in Canada is university based. Currently, six of the thirteen Canadian Physiotherapy Schools offer a Masters Entry-Level Program. The other seven programs are undergraduate programs and plan to change to a Masters Program by 2010. To practice, physiotherapists must be licensed, or registered with the respective provincial regulatory body. Most licensing boards require graduation from a recognized Physiotherapy Program and successful completion of a National Physiotherapy Competency Exam. The Newfoundland and Labrador College of Physiotherapists requires successful completion of the National Exam for full registration.

Adapted from Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators document: Occupational Description – Physiotherapists (<http://www.alliancept.org/index.shtml>).

For more information, visit the websites listed below:

Canadian Physiotherapy Association - www.physiotherapy.ca

National Occupation Classification 2006 -

<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2006/Welcome.aspx>