

# Clinical Education

*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 College's Code of Ethics encourages registrants to participate, where possible, in the preparation of students for future practice.

The College also has an obligation to protect the public through its regulation of the practice of physiotherapists. Since the College only regulates registrants, a complaint regarding the conduct or actions of a student could result in an investigation of the supervising physiotherapist.

## Standard Statement

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

To ensure public protection, registrants supervising either physiotherapy students or physiotherapy support personnel students will assume professional responsibility and accountability for the physiotherapy care provided by students. Registrants will balance the need to encourage students' autonomy and learning with a level of supervision appropriate to the physiotherapy care assigned, and the knowledge, skill and clinical reasoning of the students.

## Common Performance Expectations for the Supervision of both Physiotherapy Students and Physiotherapy Support Personnel Students

A physiotherapist demonstrates the standard by:

1. Evaluating the knowledge, skills and clinical reasoning of the student(s) being supervised prior to assigning patient care.
2. Ensuring that the duties assigned to students are commensurate with the complexity of the environment/practice setting and their:
  - knowledge, skills and clinical reasoning;
  - level of education;
  - experience; and
  - confidence.

3. Ensuring that he or she is competent to perform any clinical intervention, service or activity that is assigned to a student.
4. Conducting ongoing evaluation of students to ensure that:
  - they are competent to perform any clinical intervention, service or activity that is assigned to them; and
  - their performance of assigned clinical interventions, services and activities meets the standard of practice of the profession.
5. Ensuring that he or she supervises students at an appropriate level based on consideration of the activities that the student will perform, minimizing any potential risk of harm to the patient and providing safe, quality care.
6. Obtaining informed consent from patients or their substitute decision makers prior to involving students in the management of patients' physiotherapy programs.
7. Ensuring that patient health records and related documentation written or completed by students include their name and student status.
8. Ensuring that patient health records and related documentation written or completed by a student include a formal acknowledgment, such as a co-signature, that the information has been reviewed by the supervising physiotherapist.
9. Immediately discontinuing student involvement in patient care in circumstances where their actions or deficient knowledge, skills and clinical reasoning places the public at risk, or where the patient withdraws consent for their involvement.

## Performance Expectations for the Supervision of Physiotherapy Students

A physiotherapist demonstrates the standard by:

10. Ensuring that physiotherapy students perform controlled acts only when:
  - the act is within the scope of practice of the profession;
  - the act is authorized to physiotherapists;
  - the registrant supervising the physiotherapy student in the performance of the controlled act is competent to perform the controlled act;
  - the physiotherapy student's performance of the controlled act is under the direct supervision of a registrant until he or she is able to safely and effectively perform the act with a consistent level of competence; and
  - the supervision of the physiotherapy student's performance of a controlled act continues at a level appropriate to the risk of harm thereafter.
11. Maintaining professional accountability for all aspects of physiotherapy care assigned to physiotherapy students including:
  - interpretation of referrals;

- initial assessments and evaluations;
- their use of support personnel;
- the development, evaluation and modification of the treatment plan;
- documentation and billing; and
- discharge planning.

## Performance Expectations for the Supervision of Physiotherapy Support Personnel Students

A physiotherapist demonstrates the standard by:

12. Ensuring that physiotherapy services are assigned to physiotherapy support personnel students in keeping with the College Standard for Professional Practice: Physiotherapists Working with Physiotherapist Support Personnel. This includes ensuring that these services are only performed under the direction and supervision of a physiotherapist.
13. Ensuring that he or she supervises physiotherapy support personnel students in keeping with the College Standard for Professional Practice: Physiotherapists Working with Physiotherapist Support Personnel.
14. Ensuring that physiotherapy support personnel students do not perform controlled acts.
15. Maintaining professional accountability for all aspects of physiotherapy care assigned to physiotherapy support personnel students.

## Definitions

**Student:** For the purposes of this standard, there are two types of students:

- a physiotherapy student; and
- a physiotherapy support personnel student.

High school co-op students, student volunteers and others who work in a physiotherapy practice are excluded from the definition of student in the context of this standard because they are not engaged in fulfilling educational obligations to become either physiotherapists or physiotherapist support personnel.

**Physiotherapy Student:** A person enrolled in a university physiotherapy program to become a physiotherapist who is fulfilling the clinical experience requirement. Because they are engaged in fulfilling the requirements to become regulated health professionals, physiotherapy students are permitted by the Regulated Health Professions Act to perform controlled acts authorized to physiotherapists under the supervision of a College registrant.

**Physiotherapy Support Personnel Student:** A person who is enrolled in a post secondary program to acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities required to assist a physiotherapist in the delivery of a physiotherapy treatment plan when participating as part of the clinical experience requirement for the program.

**Direct Supervision:** Where a registrant is present to observe and correct, as needed, the performance of the physiotherapy student. Direct supervision requires that the supervisor be in the room. The goal of direct supervision is to provide reasonable assurance that concerns related to the performance of controlled acts are identified and corrected before patients are harmed. This standard only uses the term “direct supervision” in the context of performing controlled acts.

## References

Physiotherapy Act, Sections 3, 4

Regulated Health Professions Act, Sections 27, 29

Standard for Professional Practice: Physiotherapists Working with Physiotherapist Support Personnel.

Guide to the Standard for Physiotherapists Working with Physiotherapist Support Personnel

Essential Competency Profile for Physiotherapists in Canada. July 2004

College of Physiotherapists of Ontario, Code of Ethics

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