

Duty of Care

Standard

The physiotherapist has a duty of care to their clients, and an obligation to provide for continuity of care whenever a therapeutic relationship with a client has been established.

Expected outcome

Clients can expect that their interests will be the primary consideration when receiving physiotherapy services and that they will be provided with the information needed to manage their physiotherapy needs and to access ongoing care if their physiotherapist is unavailable or unable to continue the therapeutic relationship.

Performance expectations

The physiotherapist must:

- A. Take responsibility for maintaining an effective therapeutic relationship.
- B. Facilitate shared decision-making by taking the time to provide education regarding the client's condition, supporting health literacy and facilitating the transition to self-management.
- C. Not provide a physiotherapy service when the client's condition indicates that commencing or continuing the physiotherapy service is not warranted or is contraindicated.
- D. Recognize that clients have the right to make informed decisions about their own care, even when the physiotherapist believes the decisions may put the client's health at risk.
- E. Not allow their personal judgments about a client, the client's lifestyle or health choices to compromise the client's physiotherapy care. The physiotherapist does not withdraw from or refuse to provide care due to the physiotherapist's judgements about a client, the client's lifestyle or health choices.
- F. Employ respectful conflict resolution strategies when conflict arises.
- G. Make appropriate arrangements for continuity of care during planned absences.
- H. When discharging a client in need of ongoing care:

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- i. Not abandon clients.
- ii. Document their reasons for discontinuing care.
- iii. Advise the client of their decision to discontinue care and rationale.
- iv. Ensure continuity of care, making appropriate arrangements for transfer of care to another physiotherapist or providing the client with information regarding other physiotherapy service options. And
- v. Provide care until transfer to another physiotherapist can be arranged or provides a reasonable opportunity for the client to arrange alternate physiotherapy services.

The Physiotherapist:

- I. May discharge a client without providing for continuity of care if:
 - i. The client, or providing care to the client, poses a safety risk to the physiotherapist or others within the practice setting.
 - ii. client is abusive (physically, verbally, emotionally or sexually) towards the physiotherapist or others within the practice setting.

Related Standards:

Communication

Informed Consent

Assessment, Diagnosis, Treatment