

### Health Equity and Anti-Discrimination

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For the purposes of this standard, **identity, culture, and individual characteristics** refer to an individual's personal traits and the communities to which a person belongs. This can include, but is not limited to, characteristics such as physical appearance, body size, disability status, use of aids, mental health or neurodiversity, religion, race, Indigeneity, nationality, age, language, ethnicity, sexual identity, gender identity, socioeconomic status or social group. All individuals inhabit more than one social location and possess a unique combination of identities and individual characteristics.

#### Standard

The physiotherapist demonstrates **respect** towards people of all identities, cultures, and individual characteristics and provides safe equitable access to physiotherapy services. Incorporating an **anti-discrimination** approach to all aspects of physiotherapy service delivery.

#### Expected outcome

**Clients** can expect that the physiotherapist demonstrates respect and provides care that is safe, equitable, and inclusive of the client's **identity, culture, and individual characteristics**.

#### Performance expectations

#### Reflective Practice and Education

The physiotherapist:

- A. Learns about the negative effects of discrimination and trauma, and their impacts on clients during health care experiences.
- B. Reflects on, identifies, and avoids acting on any stereotypes or assumptions they may hold about a client based on the client's identity, culture, and individual characteristics.
- C. Reflects on how their privileges, biases, values, belief structures, behaviours, and positions of power may impact the therapeutic relationship.
- D. Responds appropriately to feedback on their own behaviour towards clients, particularly in relation to respect for the client's identity, culture, and individual characteristics.
- E. Engages in ongoing education on privilege, discrimination, and **systems of oppression**; social determinants of health; **cultural safety** and **cultural humility**; and **social justice**.

## Anti-Discrimination in Practice

The physiotherapist:

- F. Works to identify, address, prevent, and eliminate discrimination within the practice setting and their sphere of influence.
- G. Takes appropriate action when they observe others acting in a discriminatory manner by:
  - i. Helping others to identify and eliminate discriminatory attitudes, language, or behaviour.
  - ii. Supporting clients, colleagues, and others who experience and/or report acts of discrimination.
  - iii. Reporting acts of discrimination to leadership and/or other appropriate authorities.
  - iv. Educating in a respectful manner clients, staff, and others who demonstrate racist attitudes, language or behaviors, Including **microaggressions**
- H. Creates safe health care experiences for clients, free from discrimination by seeking to understand how the client's identity, culture, individual characteristics, values, and beliefs affect their experience of care, and incorporating this understanding into all aspects of physiotherapy service delivery.
- I. Treats clients with respect and empathy by:
  - i. Recognizing that **bias** (implicit and explicit) negatively affects client care and outcomes.
  - ii. Acknowledging and respecting the client's identity, culture, and individual characteristics.
  - iii. Treating clients and their families with compassion.
  - iv. Listening to and seeking to understand the client's lived experiences and being open to learning from the client and others.
  - v. Providing the client with the necessary time and space to share their needs and goals.
  - vi. Ensuring that reasonable accommodations are provided whenever possible.
  - vii. Providing clear information and rationale regarding the physiotherapy options available, including information about what the client may experience during the health care encounter.
  - viii. Communicating information in ways that the client can understand.
- J. Provides care that considers the client's physical, mental/emotional, spiritual, and cultural needs.
- K. Facilitates the involvement of the client's family and others as needed and when desired by the client.

## Trauma-Informed Practice

The physiotherapist:

- L. Works with the client to incorporate their personal strengths to support the achievement of their health and physiotherapy goals.

- M. Recognizes the potential presence of trauma in a client’s life and adapts their approach to be thoughtful and respectful of this, including seeking permission before engaging in assessments or treatments.
- N. Recognizes that trauma may affect how clients view, access, experience, and interact with the health care system.

**Related Standards:**

Communication  
Indigenous Cultural Safety, Humility and Anti-Racism  
Continuing Competence  
Boundary Violations

**Definitions**

**Anti-discrimination** is a form of action against discrimination, systemic **racism** and other forms of oppression impacting marginalized groups, grounded in human rights principles of dignity, justice, and equity. An anti-discrimination mindset is based on conscious efforts and actions to provide equitable opportunities for all people on an individual and systemic level.

**Bias** is prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. This can include both explicit and implicit bias. Implicit bias refers to having attitudes, stereotypes, or prejudices towards people or groups with out being consciously aware of them.

**Client** can be interchanged with the term **Patient**. “Clients are recipients of physiotherapy services, and may be individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, or populations. An individual client may also be referred to as a patient

**Cultural humility** is a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another's experience.

**Cultural safety** is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving health care.

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**Microaggressions:** are **everyday forms of racism**, expressed through comments, actions, or behaviours that convey negative, stereotypical, or derogatory messages about a person's race or ethnicity. They often occur casually or unconsciously but can cause **significant cumulative harm**. Examples include making assumptions about someone's abilities based on their race, questioning a person's Indigenous identity, or dismissing their lived experiences.

**Racism:** a system of beliefs, attitudes, and actions that creates or perpetuates inequality, discrimination, and/or prejudice against individuals or groups based on their race or ethnicity. It often involves the use of power and privilege to advantage one group while disadvantaging and causing harm to others.

**Systems of oppression** refer to society level norms or structures that give advantage or disadvantage to individuals or groups, based on a characteristic or identity. Systems of oppression can be reproduced without individuals' intention or awareness. These systems intersect and can result in significant social and health inequities. Systems of oppression can include but are not limited to racism, sexism, heterosexism, cisgenderism, ableism, classism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and sizeism. Because individuals inhabit multiple social locations, systems of oppression can intersect.

**Social justice** refers to fairness as it manifests within society and includes fairness in healthcare. It is grounded in human rights principles and depends on four key goals: human rights, access, participation, and equity

**Respect** is the recognition of the inherent dignity, worth, and rights of every person, demonstrated through attitudes, language, and actions that are considerate, non-judgmental, and inclusive. In health care, respect means listening to clients, acknowledging their identities, cultures, and individual characteristics, and ensuring that care is delivered in ways that affirm their autonomy and humanity.

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