

COVID-19 | NSPA Update – March 20th, 2020

The NSPA wants to provide some updated information since our last update. In this email you'll find updates regarding

1. Third Party Payers and Telehealth
2. Resources for Telehealth
3. Information regarding closures

Third Party Payer Updates:

We have been in touch with the Worker's Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB-NS). They provided information regarding how claims will be handled if physiotherapy clinics are closed. They have made the option of telehealth or virtual rehabilitation available to clinicians. More information can be found here:

<https://www.wcb.ns.ca/About-Us/WCB-Nova-Scotias-Response-to-COVID-19/Information-for-Service-Providers.aspx>

We have also been in touch with the office of the Superintendent of Insurance of Nova Scotia. They have informed us that, while it is likely, motor vehicle claims can be covered for telehealth options, it will be up to the individual providers to approve such sessions. Therefore, it will be up to the individual physiotherapist to contact their patient's claims staff to request approval at this time.

We have also been working with the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) who continue to work on getting national approval for telehealth.

Telehealth

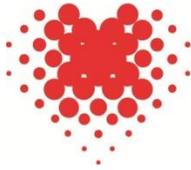
Speaking of telehealth, it is important that physiotherapists providing this option for patients be up to date on the guidelines set forth by the Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists (NSCP). There are documents setting forth the regulatory aspects that can be found here:

https://nsphysio.com/images/NSCPGuidelines/TelepracticeGuideFINALAllianceSept_2006.pdf

<https://nsphysio.com/registration/cross-border-practice/guidelines>

Also, the CPA has provided resources for telehealth and continue to work to provide additional ones. Their current resources can be found here:

<https://physiotherapy.ca/cpas-position-tele-rehabilitation>



Clinic closures and the importance and value of physiotherapy

The NSPA has felt that it is important to continue providing updates on clinic closures. We have all along promoted and supported the autonomy of each physiotherapist and clinic owner in their decision to close or remain open during this time. As highlighted in our last update and from the NSCP, there is currently no directive from the Government of Nova Scotia to close physiotherapy clinics, despite many feeling it may be inevitable.

We have heard from members about, and can appreciate, the challenges involved with the decision whether to close or not. We have heard that some are feeling stigmatized because they remain open during a time when many feel that physiotherapy clinics should, just as salons and bars have, close.

It is imperative that all physiotherapists in Nova Scotia understand that physiotherapy is an essential service and closing our clinics is not a simple decision, and believing that it is, undermines the work being done in these clinics. The treatment provided by these PT's is necessary when treating acute WCB or MVA injuries, particularly given the tight timelines, as well as other acute injuries, or following surgeries. There may be large scale closures in the province but Doctors, Nurses, and other health care professionals still need treatment, and there will still be workplace and motor vehicle accidents.

We have always believed in the autonomy and decision-making of physiotherapists as to whether their practice is safe for themselves, their patients, and their families. This is an example of a challenging time with the level of decision making that we may be faced with, as a profession, should we take on larger roles in collaborative practice, or emergency rooms, for example. I believe that Physiotherapists should feel empowered to make their own decisions, based on the information they have at hand, instead of relying solely on the Association or College. If we, as a profession, want to work fully to, or expand, our scope, it is imperative that we be able to handle this level of decision making with confidence, autonomy, and decisiveness underpinned by a belief in the importance of physiotherapy in the healthcare system.

I believe the Government and College giving us this vote of confidence says a lot about their belief in us as practitioners. There is, of course, a warning for social distancing but this is no different than warnings we face in the hospital on a daily basis, yet we still go in and treat patients because it is an essential service. We do this because we've earned the autonomy and belief from both the government and regulators that we are capable and trustworthy to do our job, in the face of enormous challenges, without putting the safety of ourselves or our patients at risk. Until the time comes that it is felt this is no longer true, I believe we have the ability to continue the important work that we do.

Lastly, we need to consider the lasting impression once this crisis is over. Among the many changes that are currently taking, and will take place are rapid changes and amendments to legislation regarding the role of health professions. Despite it seeming uncertain, there will come a day when we will return back to normal. At that time we want the Government of Nova Scotia and all Nova Scotians to be thankful for the profession of physiotherapy for stepping up playing an integral role in the COVID-19 outbreak, demonstrating our value to the healthcare system. So while right now may not be the time to think more than a day in the future, it is our responsibility to keep it in mind.



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So I encourage you to support your fellow physiotherapists during this difficult time. The only way through a crisis such as this is to work together, and support each other. Be thankful of the private clinician still helping a patient following an MVA, or the cardiorespiratory physiotherapist working in the ICU, or the inpatient physiotherapist working to get patients safely discharged home to open up bed in the hospital. We all have a role, we all contribute, and its important that we remember that.

With that in mind, please let us know how you're making it through the COVID-19 crisis and how we, at the NSPA, support you through it all. We'd love to showcase some of the amazing work being done by PT's across Nova Scotia.

In good health,

Stephen Richey, PT

President