



Physiotherapy: A Crucial Part of Team-Based Health Care

How we help

- Physiotherapists and physiotherapy assistants provide a wide range of evidence-based services. Just a few of our recognized areas of expertise include cardiorespiratory, oncology, paediatrics, seniors' health, sport, musculoskeletal, neurosciences, pain sciences and women's health services.
- Our skill set offers cost-savings potential, especially with an aging population in Canada.¹⁻⁴

Primary Care

- A recent systematic review by Canadian researchers concluded that the care provided by advanced practice physiotherapists to individuals with musculoskeletal disorders was on par or better compared to usual care provided by physicians, including orthopaedic surgeons.⁵ Review results concluded that physiotherapists are capable of providing accurate diagnoses, effective treatment, efficient use of healthcare resources (reduction in wait times, fewer tests ordered and reduction in direct hospital costs), and patient satisfaction.
- Research involving cost-effectiveness of physiotherapy with individuals experiencing acute low back pain (LBP) indicates that early access to physiotherapy can result in reduced healthcare costs for patients with subacute LBP, decreased need for advanced imaging, surgeries, injections, and opioid prescriptions, and improvements in quality of life.⁶⁻⁷
- Specific fall prevention programming delivered to hospital inpatient units has been shown to reduce fall rates.⁸ This improves patient care and reduces healthcare costs associated with injuries resulting from falls.⁸
- Increased availability of physiotherapy services for patients in the early stages of post-stroke can result in healthcare savings due to shortened hospital stays, decreased future healthcare needs and improved health and quality of life outcomes.¹⁰
- Cardiorespiratory physiotherapy service delivery in intensive care units has been found to improve survival and functional outcomes.¹²⁻¹³

Continuing Care

- Seniors account for more than 75% of Canadians requiring home care.¹⁴ Frail older inpatients receiving physiotherapy services more promptly after hospital admission have significantly shorter stays in hospital and less care needs upon discharge.¹⁵ This results in healthcare cost-savings benefits.¹⁰
- Early supportive discharge (ESD) rehabilitative programs reduce hospital length of stay and decrease admission to institutionalized care, enabling patients to be supported in their own homes.¹⁶ The success of these programs can be partially attributed to the availability of supplemental community and home-based interventions when needed.¹⁷
- Additional benefits of physiotherapy services delivered in the community include:
 - Facilitation of the transition back home after a hospital stay by optimizing safety of the home environment.¹⁸
 - Assistance with maintaining an individual's functional independence including self-care and engagement in leisure activities.¹⁹
 - Improvements in quality of life.²⁰
 - Reduction in falls risk by engaging individuals in a properly tailored community-based exercise program.²¹ Reduction in falls results in fewer hip fractures and thus reduces health care costs and mortality rates.⁸
- Physiotherapy interventions can play an important role in decreasing pain and fatigue, increasing function and improving quality of life and independence in patients with palliative conditions.²²⁻²³
- The Atlantic Provinces are home to the highest proportion of seniors in the country; the 2016 Canadian census showed that 19.9% of Nova Scotia's population is aged 65 or older.²⁴ Physiotherapists act as key members of an extensive interdisciplinary team working in these settings, especially in relation to provision of preventative and rehabilitative services.¹

Conclusion

- With high quality evidence to support the benefits of including physiotherapists in team-based care, physiotherapy services must be further integrated into the healthcare system. Patient satisfaction will increase, costs will be reduced and healthcare delivery will be effective and efficient.
- With an aging population in Nova Scotia, it is time for physiotherapists and physiotherapy assistants to begin playing a much larger role in the healthcare system.

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