

---

---

# **BULLETIN III<sup>1</sup>:**

## **THE NATIONAL PHYSIOTHERAPY ADVISORY GROUP<sup>2</sup>**

### **PHYSIOTHERAPY ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION PROJECT**

**June 2001**

---

---

#### **Background - The Present Status of Physiotherapy Entry-Level Education:**

In Canada, twelve of the thirteen physiotherapy education programs award graduates a baccalaureate degree. One program offers a master's entry-level degree, however five programs have plans to offer masters entry-level degrees within the next five years.

In May 2000, the Canadian Universities Physiotherapy Academic Council (CUPAC) held a planning session to consider the direction for physiotherapy academic programs, including the introduction of the master's entry-level degree. Based on the outcome of this meeting, the following goal was established:

"For all physiotherapy professional stakeholders to develop a white paper and arrive at a consensus statement regarding a vision for master's entry-level to practice in Canada and establish mechanisms by which each of these groups can support implementation of the vision."<sup>3</sup>

As a follow-up to this planning session, the National Physiotherapy Advisory Group (NPAG) is leading a project that includes the development of a discussion paper on physiotherapy entry-level education in Canada.

#### **Frequently Asked Questions About Changes In Physiotherapy Entry-Level Education<sup>4</sup>**

*What is the difference between a post-baccalaureate/professional degree (for example, a masters entry-level degree- MPT) and an advanced/ research degree (for example, a Masters of Science - MSc)?*

A professional post-baccalaureate degree or a professional baccalaureate degree in physiotherapy are currently the entry-level degrees into the physiotherapy profession. An entry-level degree provides you with the basic requirements to obtain a license to practice as a physiotherapist. An advanced or research degree prepares you with advanced research skills and usually requires you to complete and defend a thesis. An advanced degree may be required by some universities, in order to pursue doctoral or PhD studies. For a further explanation about the differences between

---

<sup>1</sup> Information from the two previous versions of the Bulletin has been incorporated in this document.

<sup>2</sup> The National Physiotherapy Advisory Group (NPAG) is composed of four national physiotherapy organizations: the Accreditation Council of Canadian Physiotherapy Academic Programs (ACCPAP), the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (The Alliance), the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) and the Canadian Universities Physical Therapy Academic Council (CUPAC)

<sup>3</sup> A Vision and Action Plan for Physiotherapy Academia in Canada, May 2000

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from "Fact Sheet on Professional Masters Program in Physiotherapy at McMaster University (June 2000)

---

---

a professional entry-level degree and an advanced research degree, refer to Appendix 1.

*If an education program moves to offer a post-baccalaureate entry-level degree, how will the program change?*

The post-baccalaureate degree programs will generally have different admission requirements (for example, a 4 year degree with a B Average), different evaluation standards (for example, a pass of 70%) and a substantially revised curriculum. In addition, there may be some curriculum changes such as: greater integration with a body systems approach; a focus on community practice including health promotion and population health; increased focus on evidence based practice and research; greater exposure to entrepreneurship, a wide variety of professional roles and collaboration with other professionals.

*With some programs moving towards offering an entry-level post-baccalaureate degree, will I be disadvantaged because I graduated with a baccalaureate degree in physiotherapy (for example, a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physiotherapy – BSC PT)?*

A professional degree prepares students for entry to physiotherapy practice. It is important to recognize that there are a number of routes to obtaining entry-level requirements. Regardless of the qualification that you receive, whether baccalaureate or masters, you still graduate as an entry-level physiotherapist.

Some view the move to a post-baccalaureate degree entry requirement as part of the natural evolution of the physiotherapy profession. The expansion of the physiotherapy scope of practice, increased autonomy and increased emphasis on theoretical and scientific bases of practice means that new graduates need a much different skill set than in the past. However, it is important to note that a consensus has not been developed that the profession should move towards mandating a post-baccalaureate degree as the qualification for entry-level practice.

*Will there be a bridging program available for obtaining a post-baccalaureate degree?*

Some education programs may choose to offer a bridging program within the university structure. However, this is not necessary for practicing physiotherapists as they have already met entry-level and licensing requirements.

### **For further information:**

A discussion paper has been prepared to provide detailed information about this issue titled “Let’s Discuss Physiotherapy Entry-Level Education in Canada...Issues, Options and Models”. A copy of the paper can be found on the Web site of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association at [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca).

To find out more about how you can provide input or for more information about the Physiotherapy Entry-Level Education project contact: *Paul Harter, CPA Program Co-ordinator; Education, Practice and Research Department at 613-564-5454 ext. 225 or by e-mail at [pharter@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:pharter@physiotherapy.ca).*

**NATIONAL PHYSIOTHERAPY ADVISORY GROUP**  
**Physiotherapy Entry-Level Project**

**Definition of Degrees**

**Entry-Level or Professional Degrees**

*Definition*

The degree is conferred upon completion of an education program that prepares the graduate to practice as a physiotherapist.

*Examples of degrees include:*

- Bachelor of Science Physical Therapy (BScPT)
- Masters in Physical Therapy (MPT)
- Doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT)

*Key Features*

- may be offered as an initial baccalaureate degree, a second baccalaureate degree or a post-baccalaureate degree
- completion of the degree is required in order to be able to register or become licensed to practice as a physiotherapist
- the course of study focuses on the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to practice as a physiotherapist

**Advanced or Research/Scientific Degrees**

*Definition*

The degree is conferred upon completion of an education program that provides graduates with advanced knowledge and skills related to research in a specified area of study.

*Examples of degrees include:*

- Masters of Science (MSc)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

*Key Features*

- only offered as a post-baccalaureate degree
- usually involves preparation and defence of a major paper or thesis
- the advanced masters degree (MSc) is required, by most universities, for a candidate to pursue a doctorate degree (PhD)
- the program focuses on advanced knowledge and skills related to a specific area of study and research