

Canadian Alliance of *Physiotherapy* Regulators

National Guidelines
For the Use of Title and Credentials
By Physiotherapists
In Canada

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Canadian Alliance of *Physiotherapy* Regulators
National Guidelines for the Use of Title and Credentials
By *Physiotherapists in Canada**

Note to Readers

This guideline describes the consensus view of the provincial/territorial physiotherapy regulators in Canada and was developed through research and consultation with stakeholders in physiotherapy regulation and practice in Canada in 2001. It also includes the views of *The Alliance* Work Group on the Use of Title formed in 2002.

Physiotherapists and facilities where physiotherapy care is provided are advised to contact their respective provincial/territorial physiotherapy regulator to establish any applicable or specific provincial/territorial requirements. For a detailed list and contact information for provincial Colleges and territorial regulatory organizations please see Appendix A.

This document is available in English and in French from *The Alliance* office.

* Physiotherapy, physiotherapist, physical therapy, physical therapist, physiothérapeute, physiothérapie, PT, and pht are official marks used with permission. The terms physiotherapy and physiotherapist are considered synonyms for physical therapy and physical therapist respectively and will be used interchangeably in this document.

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National Guidelines for the Use of Title and Credentials By Physiotherapists in Canada

INTRODUCTION

By definition, *title* is a distinctive name that conveys important information about the titleholder. Titles may also have legal protection and, in such cases, it is important to recognize the differences between the use of formal and non-formal titles. In Canada, physiotherapists use a variety of titles and designations to identify themselves. This variation may result in confusion to the public, health care professionals and others about physiotherapist roles and responsibilities. The Canadian Alliance of *Physiotherapy* Regulators (The Alliance) believes that public interest is served when variation is reduced and whenever possible, national guidelines are implemented. Therefore, this guideline was developed to promote consistency in title, title abbreviation and use of credentials.

Across Canada, provincial and territorial legislation establishes the framework for health professional regulation including the regulation of physiotherapists. The regulations stipulate that no persons other than registrants of a provincial/territorial regulator (i.e. College) may use the titles “physical therapist”, “physiotherapist” and “physiothérapeute” and abbreviations “PT”, and “pht”. The underlying intent of the legislation is to protect the public by ensuring appropriate and authorized use of title. The public, as well as provincial/territorial regulators, must be able to identify those individuals registered as physiotherapists.

In addition to provincial/territorial legislation, The Alliance, using the Federal Trademarks Act, officially marked 10 physiotherapy title words, effectively removing them from generic use.

The intent of this guideline is to raise awareness about issues related to title, as well as promoting the consistent use of title, title abbreviations and credentials among physiotherapists in Canada.

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KEY PRINCIPLES USED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDELINES

➤ **Autonomy**

Provincial autonomy in implementation of the national guideline will be respected.

➤ **Clarity**

The public interest shall be promoted with clear, consistent and appropriate representation of title, title abbreviations and credentials.

➤ **Consistency**

The appropriate use of title, title abbreviations and credentials shall protect the public from unauthorized or inappropriate use. It shall also allow regulators to accurately identify physiotherapists if necessary.

➤ **Comprehensibility**

The public will have an accurate understanding of the physiotherapist's qualifications, which relate to the competence of the physiotherapist to provide physiotherapy care.

TITLE ISSUES

Title Protection

Title protection is a key element in the regulation of health professions in Canada and is intended to protect the public by ensuring that only properly qualified individuals use the title protected by law. The granting of title is a privilege awarded to members of a regulatory College having demonstrated that they possess the required knowledge, skills and attributes to practice their profession and are accountable for the delivery of professional services. Title therefore provides members of the public with important information about the titleholder.

Use of Title Words

Use of title words is outlined in detail in each provincial/territorial regulatory framework and is limited to use by those who meet the educational qualifications or other measures of competence and are registered within that jurisdiction. Protected titles in Canada include “physical therapist”, “physiotherapist” and “physiothérapeute”. Abbreviations, where applicable, include “PT”, and “pht”. These titles apply to physiotherapists treating human clients. Physiotherapists who practice in the animal rehabilitation field should refer to their provincial/territorial regulatory College for direction regarding use of title.

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Title Abbreviation and Criteria for Use

There are two acceptable abbreviations for the title words: PT is the acceptable English abbreviation and pht is the acceptable French abbreviation. Documents or records signed in the capacity or role of a physiotherapist (e.g. charts, reports, bills) should include either the full professional title or an approved abbreviation. Colloquial terms such as “physio” or “therapist” are not acceptable abbreviations of the title words.

Abbreviations are acceptable in, but not limited to, the following situations:

- on the first chart entry by a member of an organization having an acceptable list of abbreviations;
- on the second chart entry after the title is written in full or above a line with the full title in print;
- on business cards, letterhead, communication materials (e.g. brochures).

Official Marks

In 1999 and 2000, additional protection for Canadian physiotherapists was obtained for ten words that describe the physiotherapist’s title, title abbreviations and practice through “Official Marks” registered under the Section 9 of the Federal Trademark Act. The effect of official marking is to effectively remove protected titles from generic use. See *Appendix A* for the list of Official Marks that can be used only by registered physiotherapists in Canada.

USE OF CREDENTIALS

Credentials refer to those words or abbreviations that indicate an educational qualification, certification, or specific competency, which are used by physiotherapists in their formal or informal written or verbal communications related to the provision of patient care services.

The provincial/territorial physiotherapy regulators acknowledge and support the development of advanced or focused competence and additional education and qualifications. However, physiotherapists must be careful not to imply specialization or specialty practice through the use of credentials.

Physiotherapists’ use of credentials should be limited to those credentials that meet the following criteria:

- 1) Denote educational standards which are commonly understood by the public (e.g. Master’s Degree is commonly known to be an advanced educational degree);
- 2) Denote credentials with educational standards that have standards that are consistent and verifiable;
- 3) Denote credentials that are related to the physiotherapist’s professional practice (i.e. physiotherapy and not other work such as volunteer activities or associations).

Only credentials approved by the College (where applicable) or as described in this guideline should be used. The form and format for those credentials should also be consistent with the guidelines.

Acceptable credentials include

- name of the academic diploma or degree (s) earned to allow the practice as a physiotherapist, as the credential appears on the official certificate
- acceptable abbreviation of the title of the diploma or degree (s)
- Masters and Doctorate degrees from an accredited Canadian university, or deemed equivalent to those degrees
- credentials resulting from additional training that are acceptable to the College e.g.: PT with training in Manual Therapy

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Acceptable Formats for Title and Credentials

Physiotherapist's Name	Title or Title abbreviation	Degree/diploma related to title	Other acceptable degrees/diplomas/credentials
FIRST IN SEQUENCE	SECOND IN SEQUENCE	THIRD IN SEQUENCE OR FROM HIGHEST TO LOWEST	FOURTH IN SEQUENCE OR FROM HIGHEST TO LOWEST
Jean Martin	Physiotherapist	BSc (PT)	MBA
J. Martin	physiothérapeute	BHS(PT)	BSc, Psych
Jean M.,	Physical Therapist	BSc(PT),	Doctoral candidate MA(Ed)
Martin, Jean	pht	BHSc(PT),	PhD
J. Martin	PT	MHSc (PT), Dip (P & OT)	
J. Martin	PT	MHSc (PT)	BA
J. M,	I.D. #4537, PT,	BSc(PT),	MA(Ed)

Examples of Inappropriate Credentials

- MCPA
- Certified Hand Therapist
- Dr. Jean Martin PhD, Physiotherapist

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OTHER ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH USE OF TITLE

Use of Membership in Associations or Special Interest Group as a Credential

In the past, some physiotherapists have included abbreviations of their memberships with a professional association, society or body after their full title or title abbreviation as a component of their credentials. Membership - with the exception of “Member of the College of Physiotherapist of XXY province”- is not a recognizable qualification. As this credential does not meet the criteria outlined previously, it is not an acceptable credential.

The following list and similar other memberships are not considered credentials by this guideline and as such should not be used by physiotherapists in their formal or informal written or verbal communications related to the provision of patient care services:

MCPA Member of Canadian Physiotherapy Association

MCSP Member of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (British Association)

SPD Member of the Sports Physiotherapy Division

Specialization

As a profession, physiotherapy is in the early stages of developing programs of “specialization”. However, there are no processes in place to award specialty designations, nor are any such designations recognized by regulatory Colleges in Canada. Physiotherapists must be aware of any professional misconduct and/or advertising regulations that restrict the description of practice in a way that suggests specialization.

While there is no approved specialization process, physiotherapists may communicate preferred areas of practice e.g.: stroke management, sports injuries.

The Alliance recognizes that the profession is working towards the development of a specialty or advanced practice framework. The progress of this initiative shall be followed and the guidelines will be reviewed from time to time.

Job Names, Title and Credentials for Associated Support Workers and Students

While the Colleges regulate physiotherapists, it is also important that the public clearly recognizes the relationship of individuals involved in associated roles in providing physiotherapy services to the public (e.g. support workers).

Individuals in supporting roles such as Physiotherapy Students, Physiotherapist’s Assistants or Volunteers must be introduced by name and title. Physiotherapists must clarify if there is a misunderstanding that a non-regulated or non-registered member is a physiotherapist.

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Physiotherapy Students

Students enrolled in accredited physiotherapy educational programs should use the title “Student Physiotherapist”, “Student Physical Therapist” or “Etudiant en physiothérapie”.

The student should use this title only during activities directly related to and approved, by the university program. Students should not use the title in alternative situations (i.e. a volunteer role or job). Once a student has graduated he/she is no longer a student and should not use the student title.

The outcome of graduation from an accredited Canadian entry-level physiotherapy program is not necessarily the ability to register as a physiotherapist. Graduates from an accredited physiotherapy program must be registered with a provincial/territorial physiotherapy regulator (i.e. College) *before* using the titles Physiotherapy Resident, Physiotherapy Intern, Physiotherapist, Physical Therapist or physiothérapeute.

Dual Health Care Practitioners and Registration

Some physiotherapists are educated in, and practice, other regulated or unregulated health disciplines. In these circumstances there is potential for patients, insurers, and others to be misled about the capacity in which the professional is acting.

Physiotherapists who practice more than one discipline must keep their roles, titles, credentials, documentation and billing practices separate and distinct.

Use of the Title “Dr.”

Physiotherapists who hold a doctorate degree may not use the title of “doctor” or an abbreviation of the title “Dr.” preceding their professional name *in the course of providing patient care services* as a physiotherapist. Physiotherapists holding a doctorate degree may include the title of the conferred degree, e.g. PhD, in accordance with these guidelines for the use of other degrees.

Use of Other Degrees

Many physiotherapists hold conferred degrees in addition to their physiotherapy training. In these circumstances, physiotherapists may use the name of the conferred degree after their name and in addition to their physiotherapy qualifications.

Use of Name Badges

While there are no provincial regulations requiring that physiotherapists display their name and professional title (in full or abbreviation), it is recommended that name badges be worn in a readily visible location at all times while providing patient care service to members of the public. Patient care services include physiotherapy services provided in a publicly funded organization, private practice, client’s home, and industry or in the community.

The use of a name badge serves the public interest by assisting in identifying the physiotherapist by name and title. If an alternate name is used professionally by a registrant, for personal safety or other reasons, the alternate name must be registered with the College *prior to its use*.

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Communicating Additional Education

Many physiotherapists receive additional education in the course of a career. There are benefits to both the physiotherapist and the public when such information is communicated clearly, consistently and completely. Information about additional education, preferred areas of practice or practice area of interest may be communicated e.g.: Practice limited to hand therapy, PT with additional training in Pediatric Therapy.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This guideline describes the consensus view of the provincial/territorial physiotherapy regulators in Canada and was developed through research and consultation with stakeholders in physiotherapy regulation and practice in Canada in 2001, as well as through discussions with The Alliance Work Group on the Use of Title formed in 2002.

The Alliance believes that the public interest is protected through a consistent application of use of title, title abbreviations and credentials. This guideline is one tool that regulators can use to assist and support the consistent use of title, title abbreviations and credentials among physiotherapists across Canada.

The guideline is available in English and French on The Alliance Website [[www: alliancept.org](http://www.alliancept.org)]. As this guideline is updated, the updated versions will be available on the Website.

Physiotherapists and facilities where physiotherapy care is provided are advised to contact their respective provincial/territorial physiotherapy regulator to establish any applicable or specific provincial/territorial requirements. For a detailed list and contact information for provincial Colleges and territorial regulatory organizations please see Appendix A.

DEFINITIONS

In the context of this background paper the following definitions are used:

College refers to the physiotherapy regulator designated as the authority to regulate the practice of physiotherapists in that provincial/territorial jurisdiction.

Credentials refer to those words or abbreviations that indicate an educational qualification, certification, or specific competency.

Patient care services include physiotherapy services provided by a physiotherapist in a publicly funded organization, private practice, client's home, and industry or in the community.

Public includes patients, funders and the broader health community.

Title refers to the words "physiotherapist", "physical therapist" and "physiothérapeute" as defined and described in the provincial/territorial physiotherapy regulations.

Title abbreviation, or the abbreviation for the title words, functions as the professional designation.

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REFERENCES

1. Advertising Standard , September 12, 2001, College of Chiropractors of Ontario Website @ www.cco.ca
2. Multidisciplinary Practice Position Statement, October 2000, College of Physical Therapists of Alberta.
3. National Guidelines for Support Workers in Physiotherapy Practice in Canada, *Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators*, June 2000.
4. Principles of Conduct: Principle 9 September 12, 2001 College of Psychologists of Ontario Website @ www.cpo.on.ca
5. Professional Code, R.S.Q., chapter C-26 Updated to 22 August 2000, Division III, section 36 (n), Ordre professionnel des physiothérapeutes du Québec.
6. Professional Practice Guidelines: Registration and Use of Title, September 2001, College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario Website www.crto.ca Toronto Ontario.
7. Position Statement: Use of Title, *College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario, 2001*.
8. S. Adams (personal communication) September 2001, referring to Health Professions Act, Physical Therapists Regulation, British Columbia.
9. Standards of Practice: Chiropractic Care of Animals, August 30, 2001, College of Chiropractors of Ontario website @ www.coo.ca

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APPENDIX A

Provincial College and Territorial Contact Information

Physiotherapists and facilities where physiotherapy care is provided are advised to contact their respective provincial/territorial physiotherapy regulator to establish any applicable or specific provincial/territorial requirements.

* *Contact College for Specific Policy related to Use of Title*

College of Physical Therapists of British Columbia

Phone 604-730-9193
e-mail info@cptbc.org
web site www.cptbc.org

College of Physical Therapists of Alberta

Phone 780-438-0338; toll free in Alberta only 1-800-291-2782
E-mail cpta@cpta.ab.ca
Web site www.cpta.ab.ca

Saskatchewan College of Physical Therapists

Phone 306-931-6661
E-mail contactus@scpt.org

Association of Physiotherapists of Manitoba

Phone 204-287-8502
E-mail assocphysiomb@shaw.ca
Web site www.manitobaphysio.com

College of Physiotherapists of Ontario

Phone 416-591-3828, toll free 1-800 583-5885
E-mail info@collegept.org
Web site www.collegept.org

Ordre professionnel des physiothérapeutes du Québec

Phone 514-351-2770
E-mail physio@oppq.qc.ca

College of Physiotherapists New Brunswick

Phone 506-642-9760
E-mail physionb@nbnet.nb.ca

* Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists

Phone 902-454-0158
E-mail nsphysio@ns.sympatico.ca
Web site www.nsphysio.tekcity.net

Prince Edward Island College of Physiotherapists

Phone 902-894-2063

Newfoundland & Labrador College of Physiotherapists

Phone 709-753-6527
E-mail collegept@nf.sympatico.ca

Yukon Physiotherapy Regulatory Organization

Phone 867-667-5360 toll free in Yukon only 1-800-661-0408

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