

# The Delivery of Physiotherapy Services across Borders within Canada

## Guidelines for Physiotherapists

### Introduction

Ninety-five percent of the Canadian landmass is serviced by only 8% of registered physiotherapists<sup>1</sup>. This creates vast areas where patients have difficulty accessing care due to distance, bad weather or the absence of physiotherapy services.

In some regions of Canada, a physiotherapist may initiate therapy in one location, but the patient may require follow-up in another. In such cases, it may be preferable to have the original physiotherapist continue to provide care, rather than transferring the patient to a new provider.

Ten provincial physiotherapy regulators have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding for Cross-Border Physiotherapy. The purpose of this agreement is to enhance access to care for patients, in the best interests of patients. The agreement makes it easier for physiotherapists who are registered in one Canadian jurisdiction to obtain a certificate of registration to practice in additional jurisdictions in order to provide continuing care or physiotherapy services that are not otherwise available, whether the services are delivered in person or via tele-rehabilitation.

### Circumstances under which care may be delivered pursuant to the MOU

1. Where the physiotherapist began care in one jurisdiction and will offer follow-up care in another.
2. Where the patient would otherwise not be able to obtain care because there is a shortage of appropriate physiotherapy care available in the region or jurisdiction in which the patient ordinarily resides.

### Circumstances under which care may NOT be delivered pursuant to the MOU

1. Where there is no demonstrable patient need for tele-rehabilitation or in-person, cross-border services because appropriate and suitable in-person care would otherwise be available.
2. Any other circumstances where it appears that the provision of care is in the physiotherapist's best interests but the patient might benefit equally or more from care from a local provider.

### General Expectations:

1. The physiotherapist will have a business address in the primary jurisdiction (that is, the jurisdiction in which he or she carries a full certificate of registration).
2. The expectations defined in provincial or territorial Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics apply regardless of whether services are provided via tele-rehabilitation or through in-person patient interactions. [Note: Regulators may insert jurisdiction-specific considerations here.]
3. When providing care across provincial borders, the physiotherapist must hold an appropriate certificate to practice in the jurisdiction from which he or she provides the care and the jurisdiction in which the care is received.
4. When providing care across provincial borders the physiotherapist must inform the patient of the process to follow if they have a concern or complaint about their physiotherapy care.

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<sup>1</sup> Strengthening Rural Canada: Fewer and Older: Demographic and Population Challenges Across Rural Canada, A Pan-Canadian Report; CIHI Physiotherapist Data Tables 2015.