



COLLEGE OF
PHYSICAL
THERAPISTS
OF ALBERTA

position statement

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Physical therapists¹ have a professional obligation to avoid situations which are or have the appearance of a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is a breach of one's professional ethics that has the effect or intention of advancing one's own interest or the interest of others in a way detrimental to the interest of the patient.

When any potential conflict of interest arises, physical therapists make patients aware of the potential for conflict of interest by following the principle of full disclosure.

- ▶ Physical therapists offer the most appropriate treatment, service and advice to patients regardless of the personal benefit to themselves or the clinic.
- ▶ Physical therapists only provide professional services in situations where there is a demonstrated need for the services.
- ▶ Physical therapists do not seek or accept any benefit, directly or indirectly, for any service rendered to a patient by any other physical therapist or person other than for services provided by a partner, associate, employee or replacement physical therapist.
- ▶ Physical therapists do not receive payment or benefit for a referral.
- ▶ Physical therapists do not enter agreements where a lease, rent or return on investment is calculated based on patient volume, clinic time or other arrangements that may be construed as being associated with referral practice.
- ▶ Physical therapists may not supply, sell, rent or recommend for purchase any product or service, other than as part of the physical therapy treatment process² or professional service delivery, where the physical therapist holds a personal/financial interest in that product or service. If a physical therapist has an interest in the sale of a health-care product, it would be a conflict of interest if the physical therapist failed to disclose that interest in the product before advising a patient to buy the product. Products that are not part of physical therapy practice, (eg. herbs, nutritional supplements, aromatherapy supplies, etc.) shall not be sold from a physical therapy practice as sale of these types of products is outside the scope of practice of physical therapy.³

Note: Referral of a patient to a service, product or treatment facility where the physical therapist holds an interest has the potential to create a conflict of interest. Recommendation of a service or product where a family member has an interest also has the potential for conflict of interest. Ensure disclosure in these situations.

GLOSSARY

Benefit: A benefit shall include, but is not limited to, any financial gain, favor, good or service sought or received by the physical therapist. A benefit may be received directly or indirectly. A benefit has value.

Product: Any good, device, appliance or material.

Service: includes consultation, advice, business transactions, health care practice, or any other act that is conducted as part of physical therapy practice.

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¹ Physical therapist, physiotherapist, physical therapy, physiotherapy, physiotherapie, physiotherapeute, PT and pht are official marks used with permission. The terms physical therapist and physical therapy are synonyms for physiotherapist and physiotherapy respectively.

² This section is intended to prevent coercion of patients to buy products that are not part of treatment.

³ If products, which are not part of physical therapy practice, are sold at the physical therapy practice location, the onus is on the physical therapist to ensure patients know that the sale of such products is not part of physical therapy, nor does purchase/non-purchase of those products affect the accessibility of physical therapy services. It may be necessary for advisory notices and signs to be posted in the physical therapy practice explaining that products sold are not part of physical therapy practice.