

APA VISION

The Australian Physiotherapy Association will improve the health of Australians by supporting world's best practice physiotherapy.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Preamble

Physiotherapy is a holistic approach to the prevention, diagnosis and therapeutic management of disorders of human movement to enhance the health and welfare of the community. The practice of physiotherapy encompasses a diversity of clinical specialities to meet the unique needs of different client groups. Physiotherapy is an autonomous profession.

Australian physiotherapists are registered health care professionals with university degree qualifications. Physiotherapists who are members of the Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) are expected to undertake continuing professional development programs.

APA members are committed to promoting and facilitating the practice of physiotherapy to improve the health status of the community for the common good.

Physiotherapists who are members of the Australian Physiotherapy Association are bound to uphold the APA Code of Conduct and the four Ethical Principles on which the Code is based.

The Code of Conduct has been established by the Australian Physiotherapy Association as the basis for ethical and professional conduct which meets community expectations and justifies community trust in the judgement and integrity of APA members.

The Ethical Principles on which the Code of Conduct is founded are absolute.

The Code of Conduct, however, is a dynamic statement which reflects the changing expectations of physiotherapists and the Australian community at large. The Code of Conduct is subject to regular review to maintain its relevance and merit.

The Interpretation of the Code of Conduct provides practical interpretations to assist APA members to understand and uphold the Code. The specific interpretations of ethical and professional obligations as outlined should not be seen as exhaustive or limiting the scope of the Code.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Members of the Australian Physiotherapy Association shall uphold four cardinal ethical principles.

1. APA members shall respect the autonomy of the individual.
2. APA members shall cause no harm.
3. APA members shall advance the common good.
4. APA members shall act fairly.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Physiotherapists who are members of the Australian Physiotherapy Association shall uphold the APA Code of Conduct:

1. APA members shall respect the rights and dignity of all individuals.
2. APA members shall comply with the laws and regulations governing the practice of physiotherapy in Australia.
3. APA members shall comply with the Constitution, Regulations, Policies and Procedures of the Australian Physiotherapy Association.
4. APA members shall define their scope of practice according to current knowledge and competency standards, shall practise in a careful, honest and accountable manner and shall accept responsibility for the exercise of sound judgement.
5. APA members shall strive for standards of excellence in all aspects of physiotherapy practice, education, research and promotion.
6. APA members shall respect the confidentiality and security of client information.
7. APA members shall provide accurate information about physiotherapy to clients and the general community.
8. APA members shall communicate and co-operate with colleagues and other health care providers and agencies in the best interests of their clients and the community.
9. APA members shall contribute to the development and implementation of health services which enhance the health status of the community.
10. APA members shall act in a manner which reflects well on the physiotherapy profession.

INTERPRETATION

The Interpretation of the Code of Conduct provides practical interpretations to assist APA members to understand and uphold the Code. The specific interpretations of ethical and professional obligations as outlined should not be seen as exhaustive or limiting the scope of the Code.

Behaviour not in accordance with the Code of Conduct and/or the underlying Ethical Principles constitutes a breach of this Code.

Complaints which relate to an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct may be referred to a State/Territory Physiotherapists Registration Board, a State/Territory Health Complaints Commissioner or the Australian Physiotherapy Association depending on the circumstances of the case.

1. APA members shall respect the rights and dignity of all individuals.

- Clients shall not be denied the right to physiotherapy on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, creed or health status.
- Clients have the right to have individual feelings and cultural customs respected.
- Clients have the right to privacy.
- Clients have the right to participate in decisions about their physiotherapy care.
- Clients have the right to obtain a second opinion and to cease physiotherapy.
- Clients have the right to discuss concerns and to have complaints managed sensitively and appropriately.
- Clients have the right to expect relationships with their treating physiotherapists will be based on confidence and trust.
- Physiotherapists shall not engage in any sexual activity with a person who is a client.

2. APA members shall comply with the laws and regulations governing the practice of physiotherapy in Australia.

- Physiotherapists shall have a full understanding of all the laws and regulations relevant to the practice of physiotherapy.

3. APA members shall comply with the Constitution, Regulations, Policies and Procedures of the Australian Physiotherapy Association.

- APA members shall have a full understanding of the Constitution, Regulations, Policies and Procedures of the Australian Physiotherapy Association.

4. APA members shall define their scope of practice according to current knowledge and competency standards, shall practice in a careful, honest and accountable manner and shall accept responsibility for the exercise of sound judgement.

- Clients have the right to benefit from physiotherapy which is designed to meet their unique needs.
- Clients have the right to be referred to more suitably qualified practitioners.
- Clients have the right to be protected from inappropriate servicing.
- Physiotherapists are responsible and accountable for their provision of physiotherapy services and for the relevant knowledge and competence which such services require.
- Physiotherapists shall ensure that their practice is conducted in a safe manner, that contraindications are observed, that safety tests are undertaken and recorded, and that equipment meets health and safety requirements.

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- Physiotherapists shall not delegate any activity which requires the unique skill, knowledge and judgement of a physiotherapist.
 - Physiotherapists shall accept responsibility for all treatment provided by others acting under their supervision.
 - Physiotherapists shall, when teaching physiotherapy skills to others, ensure that they do not undermine the practice or professional standards of physiotherapy.
 - Physiotherapists shall keep a confidential record for every client to allow for the effective evaluation of the client's progress and the physiotherapist's practice.
 - Physiotherapists have the right to refuse to provide a service where there are reasonable grounds for doing so especially when, in their opinion, it is not in the best interests of the client.
 - Physiotherapists shall have adequate personal professional indemnity insurance.

5. APA members shall strive for standards of excellence in all aspects of physiotherapy practice, education, research and promotion.

- Physiotherapists shall be aware of and measure their conformance with currently accepted standards of practice.
- Physiotherapists shall participate in continuing professional development to enhance their basic skills and knowledge and to generate new knowledge.
- Physiotherapists shall support research, including the measurement and evaluation of the outcomes of physiotherapy treatment, which contributes to improved client care.
- Physiotherapists shall support high quality education in academic and clinical settings.
- Physiotherapists engaged in research shall abide by the accepted rules governing the ethical conduct of research and shall share their learning, especially in journals and conference presentations.
- Physiotherapists shall participate in peer review and other forms of practice evaluation for the purpose of continuous quality improvement and shall have the right to limit the disclosure of related information.

6. APA members shall respect the confidentiality and security of client information.

- Clients have the right to confidentiality and this right shall encompass all client information including attendance for treatment.
- Physiotherapists shall ensure that all staff under their supervision also respect client confidentiality.
- Physiotherapists shall keep a confidential record for every client which is complete, legible, understandable and held securely for at least the period required by law.
- Physiotherapists shall not disclose any information about a client to a third party without the client's permission, unless such disclosure is required by law.

7. APA members shall provide accurate information about physiotherapy to clients and the general community.

- Clients have the right to appropriate, objective, truthful and understandable information about their condition and about proposed physiotherapy procedures and programs, including expected benefits, perceived risks, alternatives, costs and fees, to enable an informed consent to be given or withheld.
- Where a client is unable to give effective consent to treatment, information shall be supplied to and consent obtained from an appropriate person acting on behalf of the client.
- Physiotherapists advertising their services shall not make false or misleading claims or otherwise bring the physiotherapy profession into disrepute.
- Physiotherapists shall use only titles which correctly describe their professional status or expertise.
- Only Fellows of the Australian College of Physiotherapists are entitled to use the term 'Specialist' or any of its derivatives.

8. APA members shall communicate and co-operate with colleagues and other health care providers and agencies in the best interests of their clients and the community.

- Clients have the right to expect that physiotherapists will communicate appropriately with professional colleagues and other relevant persons or agencies, to maximise the benefits of physiotherapy services provided.
- Clients have the right to be referred to more suitably qualified practitioners whenever that course is clinically appropriate.
- Physiotherapists shall respect client privacy during the exchange of client information within multidisciplinary teams.
- Physiotherapists have the right to expect co-operation from their colleagues.
- Physiotherapists should ensure that any public debate be conducted objectively and in the best interests of their clients and the general community.

9. APA members shall contribute to the development and implementation of health services which enhance the health status of the community.

- Physiotherapists shall participate in the planning and implementation of services designed to provide optimum health care for the community.
- Physiotherapists shall work toward achieving justice in the provision of health care for all people.
- Physiotherapists shall participate in the ongoing measurement and evaluation of the outcomes of physiotherapy treatment.
- The physiotherapy profession shall encourage the innovative extension of its scope of practice provided such development is based on evidence of efficacy and safety.

- Physiotherapists shall contribute to public education programs which provide information about the efficacy of physiotherapy intervention.
- Physiotherapists shall ensure that their physiotherapy service and fee schedules are based on fair and reasonable considerations.

10. APA members shall act in a manner which reflects well on the physiotherapy profession.

- An APA member represents the physiotherapy profession and, accordingly, is expected to behave in a manner that will enhance the honour and well-being of the profession.
- Physiotherapists shall apply fair and reasonable business principles when dealing with clients and others.
- Physiotherapists shall not sell, supply, endorse or promote the sale of services or goods in ways which exploit their professional relationships with clients.
- Physiotherapists shall not condone or associate with unethical practice and shall make reasonable efforts to refer evidence of inappropriate or unethical behaviour to the relevant authorities.