

Questions & Answers

Keeping health care providers informed of payment, policy or program changes

To: Physicians

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Re: Changes to publicly-funded physiotherapy services

1. What change is the government making to insured physiotherapy services?

Effective August 1, 2013, the government is implementing a comprehensive program for community and primary care physiotherapy. Physiotherapy will be removed from the *Health Insurance Act* as an insured service and established as budget-based programs for specific programs and health sectors. Physiotherapy services in community settings will continue to be funded and there will be improved access for Ontarians across the province.

2. Why is the government making these changes?

Currently Designated Physiotherapy Clinics (DPCs) are the only clinics eligible to bill OHIP for publicly funded physiotherapy. Since there are only about 90 DPCs in Ontario (most of them in the Greater Toronto Area), most Ontarians do not have access to publicly funded physiotherapy. In addition, the current funding model does not support current best practices.

3. What does this mean for my ambulatory patients that require physiotherapy services?

For the provider, nothing changes. It is still necessary to determine from your assessment of the patient if a referral for publicly funded physiotherapy is therapeutically necessary. Under the new funding model, a physician (or nurse practitioner) referral is required for access to publicly funded physiotherapy services provided in a publically funded clinic.

If you practice in a community where there is currently no DPC, publicly funded physiotherapy may become available for your patients. If you practice in a community that is currently serviced by a DPC and that clinic continues to participate in the provision of publicly funded physiotherapy, under the new model, the process won't change. If you practice in a community where a current DPC decides not to participate in the provision of

publicly funded physiotherapy there may be other clinics in your community that start to provide the services.

4. Are all of my patients eligible for publicly funded physiotherapy services?

To be eligible for ambulatory physiotherapy, your patient must:

- be under 20 years of age;
- be 65 years of age or over;
- be any age and a client of Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program; or
- have been hospitalized overnight for a condition that requires physiotherapy (e.g., hip surgery).

Your patients who are residents of Long-Term Care (LTC) homes will have their physiotherapy needs assessed by staff of the LTC home and their physiotherapy, if required, will be provided as part of their plan of care.

Your patients who need physiotherapy in their home will be assessed by a Case Manager from the local Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) and the service will be arranged and provided at no charge. Your referral is no longer needed for these patients. For more information about finding the nearest Community Care Access Centre, your patients may visit www.310CCAC.ca, or call 310-CCAC (2222) — the number does not require an area code and is toll free.

As part of these changes, physiotherapists may also be integrated into family health care settings such as Family Health Teams (FTHs) or Community Health Centres (CHCs). If you practice in one of these models, your patients may also get access to physiotherapy services once these changes take place.

5. Is there some information available that I can provide to my patients?

Yes, patients can call Service Ontario's Seniors' INFOLine at 1-888-910-1999 or TTY: 1-800-398-5559 with any inquiries about access to publicly funded physiotherapy services.

6. How will the changes impact me?

Your patients may ask for a referral to receive publicly funded clinic-based physiotherapy. The physiotherapist will require your referral letter in order to determine the appropriate treatment for your patient and for their own accountability/audit purposes.

7. How will I know where to refer my patients? Where will these clinics be located?

A list of participating clinics will be available through your Local Health Integration Network, your Community Care Access Centre, the Ontario Association of Physiotherapists and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. More information will follow over the summer.

8. How will this affect physiotherapy provided in hospitals?

The government is making changes to improve physiotherapy services provided in the community. There will be no effect on physiotherapy services provided by hospitals to their inpatients or through their outpatient physiotherapy departments.

9. Can I hire a physiotherapist for my FHT?

Yes, physiotherapists are now considered an approved interdisciplinary healthcare provider. The Ministry will be working with various associations (including the Ontario Medical Association, the Association of Ontario Health Centres, the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and the Nurse Practitioners Association of Ontario) on an application process for groups, such as FHTs, Nurse Practitioner Led Clinics and CHCs, to apply for PT funding.