

MAHCP Career Profile

Physio-therapist

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Do you know what a physiotherapist does and where you can find one? Most people think of physiotherapists in a sports clinic, working on injured backs or helping athletes with sprains and strains. This view persists in the public, but many people who work in hospitals and community care are becoming more aware that there is a large number of physiotherapists working in hospitals, in many aspects of care. From pre-operative counselling, to intensive care, to burns, to orthopedics and to rehabilitation, adult or pediatric, physiotherapists are found. In fact, physiotherapists, as primary health care deliverers, work as team members and leaders throughout health centers and in the community, using their expertise in movement and function to optimize the health of Manitobans.

Physiotherapists look at the impact of injury, disease or disorders on movement and function. They have a unique perspective because of their training in body mechanics and movement science, and this is incorporated with improving health, and quality of life. Ultimately, they strive to promote, restore and improve their client's function, with a variety of treatments and techniques.

Practice Settings

According to the Canadian Physiotherapy Association, physiotherapists can be found in many settings:

- Child-development centres
- Community health centres
- Fitness centres/health clubs/spas
- Government/health planning agencies
- Hospices
- Hospitals
- Individual homes/home care
- Insurance companies

- Nursing Homes/long term care facilities
- Occupational health centres
- Outpatient/ambulatory care clinics
- Physiotherapy clinics/practices/private offices
- Public settings (e.g. shopping malls) for health promotion
- Rehabilitation Centres
- Research facilities
- Senior citizen centres/residences
- Schools/universities/colleges
- Sporting events/field settings
- Sports medicine clinics
- Workplace/companies

Employment opportunities in Manitoba have in the past been fairly good, but more due to a high demand for physiotherapists across Canada and the US, than from increased job creation in Manitoba.

However, wherever physiotherapists work, similar principles are applied when seeing a variety of clients. Physiotherapists will assess a client, evaluate their movement disorders, and, using evidence-based practices, they will plan an intervention strategy. This strategy takes into account the prognosis and incorporates the best techniques that scientific evidence supports. These interventions can relieve pain, restore function, and maintain health and fitness to an end of achieving functional independence, or at least preventing further decline in function.

Physiotherapists focus on involving their clients completely in their rehabilitation from the start, to encourage the client to become part of the rehab solution, and thereby improving the effectiveness of treatments and helping maintain health after a good result is achieved.

Physiotherapists can act in a primary care capacity, due to the 'direct access' conferred on them by the Physiotherapy Act of Manitoba (2001). Direct access means that patients can access physiotherapy services directly without a physician's referral. This most notably occurs in private practice and some out-patient public centres. Physiotherapists continue to work closely with doctors, providing information to them in order to best serve the client's needs.

How Does One Become a Physiotherapist?

As with many professions today, physiotherapy started as a diploma pro-

gram. Currently it is a four-year degree program (one year of prerequisites to be accepted into the faculty, and three for the degree of BMR (PT)). It is offered here at the University of Manitoba and 12 other universities in Canada. Each program is affiliated with a faculty of medicine and accredited by the Accreditation Council of Canadian Physiotherapy Academic Programs (ACCPAP) and the (US) Council on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). Persons who apply to enter physiotherapy at the University of Manitoba, have to have a high grade point average in their 1st year of university and go through an interview process before acceptance. Fifty students are accepted each year into the faculty, though the faculty receives on average 150 applications per year, and last year interviews were only granted to people with grade point averages of 3.5 and over.

By the year 2010, or sooner, Canadian universities will offer entry-level education programs in physiotherapy only at the level of a "professional master's" degree.

Eventually it is anticipated that by 2010 a professional master's degree will be the entry-level degree for new physiotherapists educated in Canada.

Job Demands

As one might expect, the job of physiotherapy requires the worker to be able to do the 'physical demands' of the job. Physiotherapy is an active job generally speaking, at times requiring some heavy lifting, depending on the type of therapy one is working in (spinal cords, neurology, acute medicine, orthopedics). However, there are many different areas that physiotherapists can work in from consultative, administrative to direct care, depending on the persons' interests.

Regulation and Professional Organizations

Physiotherapists in Canada have the option of joining the professional association, Canadian Physiotherapy Association. This association, with almost 10,000 members across Canada, has

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played an important role in advocating on behalf of the profession, provided opportunities for professional development, and has kept physiotherapists in touch with best practices here and abroad. CPA's mission is to provide leadership and direction to the physiotherapy profession, foster excellence in practice, education and research, and promote high standards of health in Canada.

While physiotherapists are not required to join CPA, all physiotherapists who work in Canada must be registered with the College of physiotherapists in each province. In Manitoba, the College of Physiotherapists

of Manitoba fulfills this role.

CPM is responsible for safeguarding the public interest related to the delivery of physiotherapy service. Its primary role is to protect the patient/public and its secondary role is to guide/direct the profession of physiotherapy. Each College ensures that physiotherapists practicing in a particular province are registered and have met the provincial standards for entry and re-entry to practice. The College also requires that all regulated practitioners in their province meet specific standards before being allowed to practice physiotherapy. It is illegal to practice without a license, and there are laws governing the granting of a license and procedures to be followed for revoking a license.