



A Coordinated Response: The National Physiotherapy Advisory Group and Covid-19

The National Physiotherapy Advisory Group (NPAG) is comprised of four members, each with a specific role to play in ensuring the delivery of safe and competent physiotherapy services in Canada:

- The Canadian Council of Physiotherapy University Programs (CCPUP);
- The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA);
- The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (CAPR); and
- Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC).

Its mission is to promote the provision of quality physiotherapy services and positive health outcomes for Canadians through collaboration and communication on matters of mutual interest.

Achieving this collective goal has never been more challenging or important than during this unprecedented time. As with all regulated health professions in Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic has required NPAG members to develop and implement innovative approaches to ensure that physiotherapy services remain widely available without sacrificing public safety.

To this end, NPAG representatives have met on a bi-weekly basis since the pandemic began to share information and coordinate a common response. During this time, NPAG members have implemented a number of important measures aimed at mitigating the disruptions caused by the current pandemic, particularly among physiotherapy students, practicing physiotherapists, internationally educated professionals seeking licensure in Canada, and the public.

The CCPUP has:

- Supported programs in adapting curriculum to remote and modified delivery of courses.
- Worked closely with PEAC to ensure clinical education experiences meet the standards for accreditation, utilizing tele-rehabilitation where possible to enhance the ability for students to continue with their education.
- Connected program chairs and clinical education leaders to work together under a guiding set of principles to ensure high quality physical therapy education continues across Canada.
- Communicated openly and regularly with CAPR to align new curriculum schedules to PCE administration schedules to the extent possible.

The CPA has:

- Introduced a Member Relief Package that includes membership and liability insurance discounts and alternate payment arrangements.
- Communicated openly and regularly with the student and new grad community through its National Students Assembly, as well as ad hoc meetings with leaders in the student community.

- Advocated for the needs of private practice members (clinic opening guidelines), students, acute care practitioners (PPE), and much more with the NPAG coalition members, insurance industry, and others.
- Provided guidance, resources, and education to practitioners about safe delivery of care during COVID-19.
- Advocated with governments regarding the important role of physiotherapists as primary care providers and essential workers.

The CAPR has:

- Added additional PCE dates to make up for exams postponed due to the pandemic.
- Implemented a remote proctoring option for the PCE Written Component to increase exam capacity and accommodate candidate preference during the pandemic.
- Provided extensions to credentialing applicants who have been unable to complete their exams due to postponed administrations.
- Recognized tele-rehabilitation placements as Supervised Clinical Practice Hours for internationally educated physiotherapists.

Physiotherapy regulators have:

- Adjusted registration fees and renewal timing to meet registrants' needs.
- Granted extensions on provisional licenses for those registrants waiting for clinical exams.
- Provided guidance on tele-practice and COVID-related issues to support continuing care, safe for both patients and physiotherapists.

PEAC has:

- Provided educational institutions with the option to defer scheduled accreditation reviews and 2020 Progress Reports.
- Extended accreditation award expiry dates.
- Removed the requirement for accredited programs to submit a Substantive Change report during the pandemic.
- Suspended the requirement for students to complete the typically required mix of clinical education experiences prior to graduation.
- Recognized tele-rehabilitation placements an acceptable form of clinical experience towards a student's required 1025 hours of supervised clinical practice.

While the introduction of these new programs and policy changes were made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic, none have been implemented at the expense of the core mandate of NPAG or its members.

That is to say, the fundamental requirements associated with PEAC accreditation standards are unchanged; the 15 accredited educational programs operating in Canada continue to teach, supervise, and evaluate learners per these high standards; assessing professional competencies through written and clinical examination remains imperative; and the need to hold a license to practice per local regulations for the purpose of public protection is still essential.

It is this rigour that allows us to be a self-regulated profession. It is this rigour that produces some of the best physiotherapists in the world and maximizes health outcomes for patients. Eliminating or diluting any of these elements, even during this difficult time, would serve to undermine the high standards we collectively strive for.

The NPAG will continue to meet, adapt, and engage the physiotherapy community, now and in the future, to ensure that whatever challenges are faced as a result of COVID-19 are dealt with in a responsible a coordinated fashion.



CANADIAN
COUNCIL OF
PHYSIOTHERAPY
UNIVERSITY
PROGRAMS

CONSEIL
CANADIEN DES
PROGRAMMES
UNIVERSITAIRES DE
PHYSIOTHÉRAPIE



Canadian
Physiotherapy
Association

Association
canadienne de
physiothérapie



CAPR
Canadian Alliance
of Physiotherapy
Regulators

ACORP
Alliance canadienne des
organismes de réglementation
de la physiothérapie



Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada
Agrément de l'enseignement de la physiothérapie au Canada