



Health Career Directory

Physiotherapist

Overview

Treatment interventions are based on evidence-based practice, and are designed to help clients optimize their physical performance. Treatment interventions also help clients' ability to:

- function independently
- prevent and manage pain, physical impairments, and disabilities
- promote fitness, health and wellness

Physiotherapy interventions may include the use of electro physical agents such as ultrasound, laser, and electrical stimulation devices. Possible health risks associated with the use of these devices (for both patient and operator) can be well managed by following correct procedures.

Physiotherapists often work as part of a health-care team, sharing some roles and responsibilities.

They also perform many unique roles as well.

Main Roles

Physiotherapists perform some or all of the following duties:

- assess clients' physical function, analyze findings, and establish physiotherapy diagnosis
- develop treatment goals based on physiotherapy diagnosis together with the client / client's family
- implement physiotherapy interventions (exercise, therapeutic modalities, education, etc.) based on client needs, goals, and abilities
- evaluate progress to keep track of client progress and to adjust treatment
- communicate with other health care professionals and team members about clients' goals and care plan
- maintain detailed records of client's treatment and progress
- participate in safe and effective discharge planning or transition of care
- conduct research in physiotherapy and related fields
- develop physical-health promotion programs and screening tools
- provide education and consulting services to the public and other health-care professionals.

Duties and responsibilities vary from one position to another but, in general, physiotherapists:

- assess the client's level of mobility, strength, endurance and other physical abilities to determine the impact of an illness or injury on physical function
- analyze assessment findings, and develop treatment plans to restore movement and function and lessen pain or limitations to mobility
- establish treatment goals with patients based on physiotherapy diagnoses

- communicate with doctors and other healthcare professionals about clients' problems, needs and progress
- measure clients' progress regularly and adjust treatment accordingly
- advise clients on how to manage their conditions independently and help them prevent avoidable recurrences or complications
- help clients understand how the condition affects their ability to function
- advise clients on ways to avoid possible health problems.

Physiotherapists may:

- work with people of all ages or of a particular age group (for example, children or seniors)
- focus on a particular practice area (for example: orthopedics, neurology, cardiorespiratory, women's health, oncology, arthritis, trauma, sports, work injury prevention, cardiac rehabilitation or health promotion).

Who is suited to become a physiotherapist?

Physiotherapists are most effective when they have the following skills and characteristics:

- thorough understanding of anatomy and pathology
- highly perceptive and skilled critical thinker
- leadership and teamwork skills are required
- a sincere interest in helping people
- good social skills, patience, and empathy
- the ability to motivate and encourage people
- good health and physical energies
- good co-ordination and manual skill
- analytical and problem solving skills
- good organizational skills
- good oral and written communication skills
- a positive attitude.

They should enjoy developing and implementing innovative health promotion programs and dealing with people.

Who employs physiotherapists?

Physiotherapists work in a variety of settings. Physiotherapists may work in a range of public and private settings, such as:

- child development centres
- hospitals and rehabilitation centres
- community health centres
- government and health planning agencies
- home care
- continuing care facilities
- physiotherapy clinics and multidisciplinary clinics (for example, pain clinics)
- schools
- sport and recreation facilities
- fitness centres, health clubs or spas
- research facilities/ academia.

Of these work avenues, it is reported that a significant number of physiotherapists in Canada work in their own private clinics. There has been an increase in private practice over the past 10 years. Recently, there has also been a large increase in home care, both publicly and privately funded, due to the early release of acute patients from hospitals.

Full-time professionals in the public setting generally work a 36 hour week. Evening and weekend work may be necessary. Those in private practice generally work 36 to 50 hours per week. Some jobs, especially in rural regions and in home care, may require physiotherapists to travel.

Physiotherapists may be required to physically assist a client to move, to transfer clients who have limited or little mobility, and to lift and adjust equipment that weighs up to 20 kilograms.

Providing direct patient care involves bending, stretching, standing and reaching. In most work settings, a physiotherapist will lift, bend and walk frequently throughout the day. They also depend on their hands and upper body to perform hands-on treatment. Risk for musculoskeletal injury associated with these tasks may be avoided by paying attention to appropriate body mechanics and the use of specialized devices to help patient movement.

Salary

Salary Range - \$47,339 - \$69,472

Required Training and Education to Become a Physiotherapist

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is the only institution in BC at this time that offers training to become a physiotherapist. UBC offers a master's level program called a Master of Physical Therapy degree. UBC also offers a PhD program for individuals who would like to undertake further research in rehabilitation sciences. For more information on these programs visit the UBC Department of Physical Therapy website at:

<http://physicaltherapy.med.ubc.ca/>

In order to practice in BC, physiotherapists must also be registered with the College of Physical Therapists of British Columbia (CPTBC). For more information on qualifications please view the CPTBC website at: <http://www.cptbc.org/>

Most private clinics in BC prefer that new graduates have some experience in the public system so that they will be comfortable in dealing with acute clients. This will also help graduates gain wide experience under the mentorship available in hospital physiotherapy departments.

Most public practice settings offer casual, temporary, or part-time positions only, and it may take over a year for the new graduate to obtain a full-time position.

It is recommended that physiotherapists complete advanced training in areas of interest after graduation. There are over 30 different areas of specialization in physiotherapy career. Courses are offered by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association, as well as by recognized leaders in the field.

Career Advancement

New graduates tend to work in a variety of settings in order to determine their area of special interest before committing to a full-time position. By continuing professional development, physical therapists can move into specialized areas that target specific populations or dysfunctions. Some examples of these specific fields of practice are: Geriatrics, orthopaedics, burns, paediatrics, and neurology.

Most private practice physiotherapists begin by working in clinics as associates. They may become owners of clinics later in their careers as they develop clinical expertise and knowledgeable about running a business.

Physiotherapists may advance to supervisory or management positions in large organizations, or move into teaching and research positions.

Job satisfaction among physiotherapists is very high. There are many opportunities to travel and work in other countries, and to work in a variety of settings and with flexible schedules.

Resources

Education Programs

University of British Columbia
<http://rehab.med.ubc.ca/masters-program/msc-apply/>

University of Alberta
<http://www.rehabilitation.ualberta.ca/en/Students/Admissions.aspx>

University of Saskatchewan
<http://www.medicine.usask.ca/pt/admission/index.html>

University of Manitoba
http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/medicine/units/medrehab/pt/admission_hub.html

University of Western Ontario
<http://www.uwo.ca/fhs/pt/programs/mpt/admissions.html>

McMaster University (in collaboration with Lakehead University)
<http://redirect1.srs-mcmaster.ca/>

University of Toronto
<http://www.physicaltherapy.utoronto.ca/admissions/how-to-apply>

University of Ottawa
<http://www.grad.uottawa.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=1727&monControl=Programmes&ProgId=670>

Queen's University
http://www.rehab.queensu.ca/prospective.php?id_mnu=13

McGill University
<http://coursecalendar.mcgill.ca/hs201112/wwhelp/wwhimpl/js/html/wwhelp.htm#href=HSPOT20112012.10.1.html>

University of Montréal
<http://www.readap.umontreal.ca/>

University of Sherbrooke
<http://www.usherbrooke.ca/programmes/fac/sciences-sante/1er-cycle/maitrises/physiotherapie/>

University of Laval
<http://w3.fmed.ulaval.ca/readaptation/>

Dalhousie University
<http://physiotherapy.dal.ca/Educational%20Programs/MSc%20%28Physiotherapy%29/index.php>

Financial assistance and bursaries

For information about Canada student loans and grants, please visit:
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/index.shtml

Associations

Canadian Physiotherapy Association
<http://www.physiotherapy.ca/Home?lang=en-ca>

College of Physical Therapists of British Columbia
<http://www.cptbc.org/>

Physiotherapy Association of British Columbia
<http://www.bcphysio.org/>