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Message from the Chair

Welcome to the latest edition of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia newsletter, the first one for 2017. We hope that the information included is helpful and we would be pleased to receive your feedback, including suggestions as to what you'd like to hear about from the Board. I would like to highlight several important issues that are also outlined in information listed later in this newsletter.

The Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) has published a Guidance document regarding developing a case in order for Health Ministers to consider endorsing the prescribing of scheduled medicines for health professions that currently do not have this endorsement, such as physiotherapy. This Guidance is one of the first steps in an important journey for the profession to consider whether it wishes to pursue prescribing rights. Of particular consideration is how this could occur without compromising the safety of the public, and whether it is a value proposition for the community.

As mentioned in previous newsletters and communiques, Health Ministers expect there to be a consistent approach applied across all regulated health professions, including physiotherapy. That means that the Board and the profession cannot productively 'go it alone' in developing rules, including accreditation and registration standards. Any changes require cross-professional consideration and agreement. The next step in the process will be a 'how-to' guide to support the implementation of the Guidance document, which is expected to be delivered in 2017. The Board continues to work with its stakeholders to discuss the many and varied issues around physiotherapist prescribing.



Another hot topic of late is advertising health services. Advertising offences are breaches of the National Law, committed by registered health practitioners and unregistered individuals. There are a number of offences created under the National Law, including:

- unlawful use of a protected title
- performing a restricted act
- holding out (false claims made by individuals or organisations as to registration), and
- unlawful advertising.

More information about each type of offence is available on AHPRA's [website](#).

AHPRA and the National Boards take complaints about offences seriously, as they are responsible for making sure that only practitioners who have the skills and qualifications to provide care are registered to practise.

These breaches can put individuals and the community at risk. Advertising can heavily influence a patient's decision-making around their healthcare needs.

If you suspect that an offence has occurred or you have concerns about an offence, you can complete this online [form](#) and submit it along with any supporting evidence.

Later this year, the Board will join with other National Boards to review its [Code of conduct](#). This document is shared across the majority of the regulated health professions and the review has been scheduled to ensure the Code is up to date and user-friendly. The review will take some time so for updates please check the Board's website for news items and communiqués and make sure you are signed up to receive our newsletters. We will be providing information on how you can have your say.

Charles Flynn
Chair, Physiotherapy Board of Australia

Revised recency of practice registration standard now in effect

The Board's revised recency of practice registration standard is now in effect. This means that when you renew your registration at the end of November 2017 you must declare whether or not you have met the requirements of the revised standard.

The revised standard applies to all registered physiotherapists except those who are registered as non-practising.

The key change to the standard is the requirement for a minimum number of hours of practice. To meet the revised standard's requirements, a practitioner must have practised in their chosen scope of practice for a minimum of 450 hours in the previous three years or 150 hours in the previous 12 months.

Read more about the revised standard in the [Board's FAQ](#).

Physiotherapy regulation at work: Protecting the public in 2015/16

The Board has published a profession-specific annual report summary that looks into its work in physiotherapy regulation and registration over the 12 months to 30 June 2016.

The report draws on data from [the 2015/16 annual report](#) by AHPRA and the National Boards. This information provides a snapshot of the profession, and includes the number of applications for registration, outcomes of criminal history checks and segmentation of the registrant base by gender, age and principal place of practice.

Notifications information includes the number of complaints or concerns received about physiotherapists, matters opened and closed during the year, types of complaint, monitoring and compliance, and matters involving immediate action.

Insights into the profession include:

- Of the 657,621 registered health practitioners in Australia in 2015/16, 28,855 were physiotherapists (4.4% of the total registrant base).
- 2,505 new applications for registration as a physiotherapist were received.
- Registration for the physiotherapy profession grew by 4.8% during the year to 30 June 2016.
- Student registration decreased by 1.7%, to 8,943 registrants.
- 68% of physiotherapists are women; 32% are men.
- New South Wales was the principal place of practice for most physiotherapists (8,408).
- The Northern Territory was home to the least (165).
- The age bracket with the most physiotherapists was 25-29 (6,187 registrants).
- 2,385 physiotherapists were under 25 years of age; 19 were aged 80 or over.

- As part of the registration process, 2,702 criminal history checks were carried out for physiotherapists. Of 94 disclosable court outcomes, none required regulatory action.
- 102 notifications (complaints or concerns) were lodged about physiotherapists during the year, equating to less than 0.4% of the profession.
- Immediate action to suspend or limit a physiotherapist's registration was taken six times in 2015/16.
- There were 69 active monitoring cases, with most relating to suitability/eligibility for registration as a physiotherapist.
- 66 new complaints were made about possible offences relating to the use of the protected title 'physiotherapist' and 'physical therapist' or about concerns relating to claims made in advertising physiotherapy services.

Individual annual report summaries for each state and territory, offering insights into how the National Scheme is operating in each jurisdiction, have also been published.

To download this report, or to view the full 2015/16 annual report, [visit our microsite](#).

Guidance issued on endorsements about scheduled medicines

The Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) has recently endorsed *Guidance for National Boards: Applications to the Ministerial Council for approval of endorsements in relation to scheduled medicines under section 14 of the National Law*¹ (the Guidance).

The *Guidance* is designed to be used by National Boards when preparing applications to the Ministerial Council for approval of an endorsement for scheduled medicines for their profession.

The objectives of the *Guidance* are to:

- ensure robust, evidence-informed development and assessment of proposals for the use of scheduled medicines
- promote the safe and effective use of scheduled medicines
- facilitate common standards across professions for training and clinical practice with respect to the use of scheduled medicines, and/or
- facilitate nationally consistent, core scheduled medicines authorities to enable innovation in health service delivery.

AHPRA and National Boards will be producing information for stakeholders to support the implementation of the *Guidance*. This is expected to be published in early 2017.

The *Guidance* is published on the AHPRA website, see the [Ministerial directives and communiqués](#).

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

National Scheme news

Health workforce dataset released: Allied health fact sheets 2015

In partnership with the National Boards, AHPRA is responsible for the national registration process for 14 health professions. A subset of data from this annual registration process, together with data from a workforce survey that is voluntarily completed at the time of registration, forms the National Health Workforce Dataset (NHWDS).

The NHWDS includes demographic and professional practice information for registered health professionals and is de-identified before it can be made publicly available.

The NHWDS Allied Health 2015 data has recently been released as a series of fact sheets on each allied health profession, including physiotherapy, and on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners across all allied health professions – see the [NHWDS allied health fact sheets 2015](#). They were published on a new-look website, the [Health Workforce Data website](#), by the Commonwealth Department of Health.

The fact sheets present information specific to each profession. Aggregate data are also accessible via the [Health Workforce Online Data Tool](#).

The data included are generated through Workforce Surveys, which are provided by AHPRA on behalf of the Department of Health to all health professionals as part of their yearly re-registration. Each survey is slightly different and is tailored to obtain data specific to that profession.

You can find the fact sheet on physiotherapy on the [Publications page](#).

AHPRA performance report October-December 2016

The October to December 2016 quarterly performance reports for AHPRA and the National Boards are now available.

The reports, which are part of an ongoing drive by AHPRA and the National Boards to increase their accountability and transparency, include data specific to each state and territory.

Each report covers AHPRA and the National Boards' main areas of activity:

- managing applications for registration as a health practitioner
- managing notifications about the health, performance and conduct of registered health practitioners and offences against the National Law, and
- monitoring health practitioners and students with restrictions on their registration.

The reports are available on the [Statistics page](#).

To provide feedback on the reports please email: reportingfeedback@ahpra.gov.au.

AHPRA online portal for complaints or concerns launches

AHPRA has launched a new online portal to the public offering a clearer and simpler process when making a complaint or raising a concern about registered health practitioners and students.

The portal is available through the AHPRA [website](#). Alternatively, individuals can still call 1300 419 495 to make a complaint or raise a concern, while a PDF form also remains available for complainants.

The same standard applies to information and evidence regardless of whether the concern is raised online or by email, phone or form. The portal includes the requirement for a complainant to declare that the information provided in a complaint or concern is true to the best of their knowledge and belief

The portal guides users to provide information that more readily enables proper assessment of their concerns. Automated correspondence is issued to all users of the portal, including a copy of their complaint or concern and advice that they will be contacted by a member of the AHPRA team within four days.

The portal is supported by website content about the way AHPRA manages complaints or concerns about health practitioners and students. Consultations revealed the term 'notification' is not commonly understood by the broader community. In response the term 'complaint or concern' replaces the term 'notification' in the portal and the website content.

Further enhancements will be made to the [Make a complaint portal](#) based on user feedback.

COAG Health Council meeting communiqué

The Federal and state and territory Health Ministers met in Melbourne on 24 March 2017 at the [COAG Health Council](#) to discuss a range of national health issues. The meeting was chaired by the Victorian Minister for Health, the Hon Jill Hennessy. AHPRA CEO attended the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (the Council) meeting which brings together all Health Ministers throughout Australia to provide oversight for the work of the National Accreditation and Registration Scheme (the National Scheme). AHPRA and National Boards provide a regular update to the Council on our work.

This meeting had a particular focus on the progress of amendments to the National Law which, among other things, will pave the way for the registration of paramedics from 2018 and a call for expressions of interest and nominations for first appointments to the National Board prior to this. Ministers also discussed further amendments to the National Law to increase the penalties for people holding out as registered practitioners.

The Council produces a communiqué from its meeting which can be accessed on AHPRA's website.

New accreditation publications about costs and international accreditation systems

Two new papers have been published about key aspects of the accreditation functions under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

The papers provide a new analysis of accreditation costs and an international comparison of accreditation systems for registered health professions in comparable health systems.

To read more about the papers, visit the [news item](#) on the AHPRA website.

For more information

- Visit the [Board's website](#) for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines and FAQ.
- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#).
- For registration enquiries, call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 9275 9009 (for overseas callers).
- Address mail correspondence to: Charles Flynn, Chair, Physiotherapy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, VIC 3001.