

Year one: wrap-up of the National Scheme in its first year

Late in 2011 the Physiotherapy Board of Australia (the National Board), in conjunction with the nine other National Boards regulating health practitioners in Australia and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), released their annual report.

The report included first-ever national registrant data, a summary of which is provided below.

The National Board will begin publishing quarterly reports on its website on physiotherapy practitioners in Australia in coming months.

Advertising – testimonials, discounts and time limited offers

A *Fact Sheet* and *FAQ* have been published on the National Board's website under the *Codes and Guidelines* tab. They are designed to guide physiotherapists on their obligations as set out in Section 133 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law) and should be read with the *Physiotherapy Guidelines for Advertising of Regulated Health Services*.

Advertising time-limited offers is prohibited due to the potential to encourage the indiscriminate or unnecessary use of health services. Testimonials of any form, such as visual or text, are prohibited.

Advertisements must set out the **full** terms and conditions associated with the advertised gift or discount in a clear and truthful way in order that the consumer can make an informed decision about what the offer involves.

In the first year of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) the National Board focused on educating the profession about the new advertising requirements. The National Board is now taking a more structured approach to dealing with concerns about advertising, including an escalating series of warnings to practitioners.

If a practitioner who has been reminded of their obligations under the National Law fails to take corrective action, the Board may take legal action against them for non-compliance of the Board's standards and guidelines. All physiotherapists who advertise their services need to be aware of – and comply with – the guidelines.

Physiotherapist registration data

The registration data provides the opportunity to realise the distribution of physiotherapists across their principal place of practice (see Table 1), by age (see Table 2) and by gender (see Table 3).

Registered physiotherapists

Table 1. Physiotherapist registration by principal place of practice

NSW	6,589
Vic.	5,417
Qld.	4,114
WA	2,600
SA	1,828
Tas.	386
ACT	416
NT	113
No PPP	921
Grand Total	22,384

Table 2. Physiotherapist registration by age

Age	
20 – 24	1617
25 – 29	4362
30 – 34	3761
35 – 39	2970
40 – 44	2539
45 – 49	2174
50 – 54	2119
55 – 59	1424
60 – 64	791
65 – 69	381
70 – 74	147
75 – 70	48
80+	51

Table 3. Physiotherapist registration by gender

Female	Male	Not Stated
11,452	4,640	6,692

Practitioner audit

A pilot to test practitioners' compliance with mandatory registration standards, including continuing professional development (CPD) and professional indemnity insurance arrangements for the profession, is now underway.

The pilot was agreed to by all 10 National Boards currently regulating health practitioners under the National Scheme and is being run jointly by AHPRA and the Pharmacy Board of Australia.

The pilot will set up the auditing framework for use by the other nine currently regulated professions later this year. This includes determining the frequency, size and type of audits required, as well as establishing a methodology and process for reporting findings.

The purpose of the audits is to ensure that registered health practitioners are meeting the mandatory registration standards, and that the public has access to qualified and competent practitioners.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

An area generating a lot of questions from registrants is continuing professional development (CPD). All practising physiotherapists are required to:

- participate in continuing professional development relevant to their field,
- complete a minimum of 20 hours CPD per year, and
- maintain a portfolio.

On renewal of registration each year a declaration of compliance must be provided. In the latest round of renewals some physiotherapists have sought an exemption from the CPD registration standard. However the standard is mandatory and exemptions are not permitted, other than for students and physiotherapists holding non-practising registration.

Having a clear understanding of what is recognised as CPD is important for all physiotherapists. CPD includes a range of formal and informal activities. Courses and conferences are well recognised forms of CPD, but there are also many other ways in which practitioners can keep up to date and enhance their skills. In-service sessions, case conferences, journal clubs, peer consultations, mentoring arrangements, professional information exchanges at meetings, making presentations, reading professional publications, online learning and internet research are all ways in which physiotherapists can actively participate in CPD.

One of the most important aspects of CPD is reflection on new learning and how this can be integrated into practice.

The *Guidelines for continuing professional development* on the Physiotherapy Board of Australia website www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au provides more helpful information about CPD, including a portfolio template for recording CPD objectives, activities and reflection.

Single registration number for life

The current registration number of all physiotherapists will now stay with them for life. Physiotherapists registered in more than one profession will now only have one registration number per profession.

Previously, if a physiotherapist returned to practice after a break, they were issued with a new number when they re-registered.

These changes help streamline AHPRA's registration system to better manage practitioners' registration information throughout their life. They also make it easier for practitioners to keep track of their unique registration number.

Website and receiving important information by email

Further information about the National Board can be found on the website. Physiotherapists are encouraged to refer to the site for news and updates on registration standards as well as professional practice standards codes, guidelines and position statements that guide their profession.

Practitioners are also encouraged to provide their email address to AHPRA by updating their contact details online. To date, AHPRA has email addresses for more than 90% of physiotherapists, which enables direct and effective communication about important issues, such as registration renewal reminders. Regularly updating your contact details will enable the Board to send e-newsletters and other important information for the profession.

For more information

- Visit www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines and FAQs
- Lodge an enquiry form via the website by following the *Enquiries* link on the bottom of every page
- For registration enquiries call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 8708 9001 (for overseas callers)
- Address mail correspondence to: Mr Glen Ruscoe, Chair, Physiotherapy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, Victoria 3001