

Communiqué

September 2016 meeting of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia

The 78th meeting of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 30 September 2016 via teleconference.

This communiqué outlines the issues and decisions from this meeting, and other points of interest.

We publish this communiqué on our website and email it to a broad range of stakeholders. Please forward it to your colleagues and employees who may be interested.

Approved programs of study

The Board considered reports from the Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC) about its reaccreditation of two previously approved programs of study at Queensland University. The Board approved the accredited programs of study as providing a qualification for the purposes of registration as a physiotherapist from 31 December 2016.

Approved programs of study are published on a searchable database on the [Board's website](#). In accordance with the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), a program of study becomes an *approved* program of study once it is published on the Board's website and only then can it be used for registration purposes.

Further information about the accreditation process can be found at the [APC website](#).

Revised draft Accreditation standard

One of the roles of the Board is to consider Accreditation standard from its appointed accreditation authority for approval. The Board also asks its accreditation authority to revise the Accreditation standard to make sure it is up-to-date.

Accreditation standards are used to assess whether a program of study, and the education provider that provides the program of study, provides physiotherapy graduates with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to practise physiotherapy in Australia.

The APC has conducted an extensive revision of the existing Accreditation standard over the last year and has recently presented a draft revised version of the Accreditation standard for the Board's consideration. The revised draft Accreditation standard has also incorporated the binational threshold statements which were finalised and launched by the Board in 2015. More information is available on the APC [website](#).

Animal physiotherapy

The Board has received queries about the legal position on the status of animal physiotherapy.

Essentially, the National Law establishes a national registration and accreditation scheme for health practitioners (including physiotherapists) who provide treatment to humans. When registered physiotherapists or physical therapists provide treatment solely to animals, for example, veterinary physiotherapy, this practise is not regulated by the Board.

The titles 'physiotherapist' and 'physical therapist' are protected under the National Law and can only be used by people who are registered with the Physiotherapy Board of Australia. It is an offence for an unregistered person to use the protected title 'physiotherapist' or 'physical therapist' if they do so in a way that conveys that they are entitled to provide physiotherapy treatment to a human.

However, registered physiotherapists or physical therapists:

- are expected to be aware of laws in any state or territory in which they practise that restricts or prohibits the provision of health services to animals. A breach of one of these laws may be considered by the Board as a professional conduct issue
- have a responsibility to ensure that they are aware of, and practice within, the limits of their competence and scope of practice. Consequently, physiotherapists and physical therapists should carefully consider whether they have sufficient knowledge, skill and experience to provide treatment to animals.

Likewise, physiotherapists and physical therapists who provide treatment to animals must ensure that they do not give the impression that they are registered veterinarians.

More information about your advertising obligations

National Boards across the National Scheme continued to discuss issues about claims in advertising, in particular claims about benefits of treatments.

The Board would like to remind all practitioners that they must comply with the provisions of the National Law on the advertising of regulated health services, relevant national, state and territory consumer protection legislation and, if applicable, legislation regulating the advertising of therapeutic goods.

The Board has published further information on its [website](#) to help physiotherapists better understand their advertising obligations, including [Further information on advertising therapeutic claims](#).

This information does not replace the Board's [Guidelines for advertising regulated health services](#) which should be physiotherapist's first point of reference to understanding their obligations.

The burden is on you to substantiate any claim you make that your treatments benefit patients. If you do not understand whether the claims you have made can be substantiated based on acceptable evidence, then remove them from your advertising.

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) is responsible for prosecuting breaches of the advertising requirements in the National Law. This means that AHPRA with the Board needs to decide whether there has been a breach of your advertising obligations.

These are serious matters that can have serious consequences for your professional standing and your criminal record: **if in doubt about a claim, leave it out of your advertising.**

Registration renewal is due soon

Registration renewal for physiotherapists is due on 30 November 2016.

If you haven't already received an email reminder notice from AHPRA, please check that your contact details are up to date (see below). Remember to renew before 30 November if you want to continue to practise. [Online renewal](#) is quick and easy.

There is a late fee for renewal applications received in December, which reflects the cost of managing late renewals.

Under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law) if you do not renew your registration within one month of their registration expiry date you must be removed from the [Register of Practitioners](#). Your registration will lapse and you will not be able to practise in Australia until a new application for registration is approved.

If you have provided an email address to the Board or AHPRA you will have been sent email reminders. Paper reminders have also been sent to practitioners who have not yet renewed.

A video explaining how to renew registration online is available on the [Practitioner Services](#) page of the AHPRA website. More information is available on the Board's [website](#).

For more information:

- visit [Registration renewal](#)
- lodge an online enquiry form, or
- for registration enquiries call 1300 419 495 (within Australia) or +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers).

Top tips for using the Register of practitioners

The [Register of practitioners](#) is core to the work of AHPRA and the National Boards because it provides up-to-date information about every registered health practitioner, including physiotherapists. To help the public and employers get the most out of the register, we have developed [these tips](#). In particular, the tips remind anyone responsible for recruiting health practitioners how to use the register to verify a practitioner's registration status.

Are your contact details up-to-date?

It is important your contact details are up-to-date to receive renewal reminders from AHPRA and information from the Board. You can check your details via the [Login icon](#) at the top right of the AHPRA website. Email accounts need to be set to receive communications from AHPRA and the Board to avoid misdirection to an account junk box.

Follow @AHPRA on Twitter

AHPRA uses [Twitter](#) to encourage greater discussion about National Board consultations and to host regular Twitter chats on important topics.

Conclusion

We publish a range of information about registration and our expectations of registered physiotherapists on our website at www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au or www.ahpra.gov.au.

For more information or help with questions about your registration, please send a web enquiry form or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

Charles Flynn

Presiding member

12 October 2016