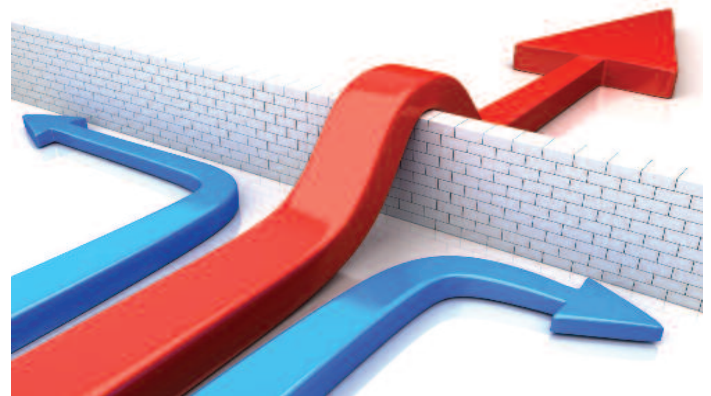




In these challenging economic times, companies are searching for ways to cut costs, decrease employee lost time at work and minimize disability claims, while continuing to provide a quality work environment for their employees. The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) recommends that employers look to physiotherapy as one solution.

## Direct Access to Physiotherapy Reduces Employer Costs

Since 1999, legislation has been in place across Canada eliminating the need for patients to obtain a doctor's referral and allowing direct access to physiotherapy. Growing evidence supports the benefits of early access to physiotherapy, yet many private insurance plans require a physician's referral if employees wish to be reimbursed for treatment by a physiotherapist.



This requirement slows employee access to the treatment they need in the early (acute) phase of an injury, when prompt treatment by a physiotherapist can have the greatest impact on their recovery.

## Top 5 Employer Benefits

### 1. Cost Reduction

Direct access to physiotherapy is cost-effective for employers, insurers, employees and the Canadian healthcare system. When comparing patients who are referred by a physician to patients who go directly to a physiotherapist, those with direct access to the physiotherapist require fewer treatment sessions, fewer diagnostic tests such as MRIs and x-rays, fewer referrals to specialists, and fewer prescriptions.

### 2. Safe and Effective Care

Physiotherapists have extensive knowledge in the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of patients with musculoskeletal, cardiorespiratory and neurological conditions. As university-educated and regulated primary health care professionals, physiotherapists are a safe and effective provider of choice for the treatment of many injuries including repetitive strain and neck and back injuries – the most common causes of employee lost-time at work. Physiotherapists also treat patients with chronic conditions such as arthritis and diabetes to help them maintain optimal function at work and play.

### 3. Increased Satisfaction and Decreased Likelihood of Re-injury

Patients who access physiotherapy directly report increased satisfaction with the care they receive and are more independent in the self-management of their condition. They are also less likely to re-injure themselves or require follow-up care once their condition is resolved.

### 4. Reduced Lost-time at Work and Fewer Disability Claims

Early intervention by a physiotherapist – which can include hands-on treatment, an individualized exercise program and education regarding return to activity – minimizes the risk of chronic injury and disability that can limit function and cause employees to be off work for extended periods of time.

### 5. No Increase in Demand for Physiotherapy

Allowing direct access to physiotherapy does not lead to an increased and potentially costly demand by patients for this service. In regions where physiotherapy services are readily available, studies have shown that the demand for physiotherapy did not increase when direct access was introduced.

During a recent meeting with representatives from Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association, CPA learned that the decision to require a physician referral to a physiotherapist is made by the employer, not the insurance provider. This unnecessary step increases costs for everyone involved, contributes to decreased productivity and lost time at work, and can lead to larger disability claims.

## Zero Investment, Major Gains

Employers can facilitate timely physiotherapy treatment by requesting that the physician referral requirement be removed by the employee insurance provider. By eliminating the need for a physician referral, your company and your employees will reap the many benefits of early access to a physiotherapist.

Contact the Canadian Physiotherapy Association at 1-888-474-9746 or [infoottawa@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:infoottawa@physiotherapy.ca) to learn more about how your company can benefit from promoting employee direct access to physiotherapy without a physician referral.

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