



# NSW Physiotherapists Registration Board

**Newsletter**  
**Issue No. 34**  
April 2007

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## **PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS**

New legislation now requires NSW health professionals, including physiotherapists, to provide evidence of professional indemnity insurance in order to be registered to practise. Professional indemnity insurance details will need to be provided as part of the information required for annual renewal of registration starting with the October 2007 renewals. In the meantime the attached questionnaire must be completed by all NSW registered physiotherapists and returned to the Board by the 31 May 2007. Accompanying the questionnaire is more detailed information.

Please direct any enquiries and completed questionnaires to:

The Registrar  
NSW Physiotherapists Registration Board  
Address: PO Box K599, Haymarket NSW 1238  
Fax: (02) 9211 9318  
Email: [physioreg@hprb.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:physioreg@hprb.health.nsw.gov.au)

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## **PAYING YOUR REGISTRATION FEE BY B-PAY?**

When physiotherapists renew their registration each year they must complete an annual declaration which includes information that legislation requires the Board to collect eg information about any criminal proceedings, impairment, professional development activity

and, from October 2007, professional indemnity insurance details.

However, with the convenience of B-pay, over 500 physiotherapists did not complete their annual declaration when they renewed their registration during 2006. The Board now has to follow up these physiotherapists for annual declarations.

If you paid your 2006 registration fee by B-pay and did not return the annual declaration, please provide this information to the Board straight away.

If you intend to pay your registration fee by B-pay this year, please remember to also complete and return the annual declaration.

## **REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT OF BOARD POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

The Board has recently reviewed some existing policies and developed some new policies. These include the following:

- Physiotherapists and Sexual Misconduct.
- Medicines to be Sold, Supplied or Used Therapeutically by Physiotherapists.
- Professional Conduct.
- Application Modification and Removal of Plaster/Casts.
- Use of New or Non Traditional Interventions in Physiotherapy.

The documents will be available on the Board's website soon at:

[www.physioreg.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.physioreg.health.nsw.gov.au)

## **IAN COLLIER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**

The Board is pleased to announce recent successful applicants of the Ian Collier Memorial Scholarship. A total of four applications were received and two were awarded scholarships under Category 2 – “Study Project in the field of Physiotherapy”.

The successful applicants are:

- Ms Renae McNamara who was awarded an amount of \$4,750 for the project titled “Effectiveness of a water-based exercise program compared to a land-based exercise program for patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and co-morbidities.”
- Ms Simone Dorsch who was awarded \$7,476 for her project “Does EMG-triggered electrical stimulation improve strength and activity in acute, very weak stroke?”

Congratulations to Ms McNamara and Ms Dorsch. The Board looks forward to seeing the results of these projects in due course.

Applications for 2007 scholarships are now open please contact the Board for details.

## **FUNDING FOR PEDro**

The Board recently approved funding equivalent to \$2 per registrant for the Centre for Evidence-Based Physiotherapy to continue to operate PEDro. PEDro is a web-based database of randomised trials, systematic reviews and evidence-based clinical practice guidelines in physiotherapy and it contains the world’s most comprehensive index of effects of physiotherapy interventions. The Centre makes the database freely available on the internet in the interests of promoting effective physiotherapy. To date it has been used by over 1.25 million website visitors worldwide and PEDro is growing rapidly. The Board has provided funding on two previous occasions to assist PEDro to get up and running. However there are ongoing costs associated with keeping the database on-line and up to date. The Board is pleased to assist again, along with various other organisations, in establishing a reliable and viable income base. The Board supports an evidence-based approach to care and encourages physiotherapists to incorporate this in clinical practice.

## **BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

With both elected and appointed Board members completing their four year term in December 2006, the NSW Minister for Health appointed a Board for the next four years to 2010.

Board members elected by registrants are:

- Virginia Binns
- Debra Shirley
- Maria Quinlivan

Board members nominated by the Minister are:

- Ian Cameron
- Christine Campbell
- David Cross
- Anne Deans
- Sandra Everett
- Vicki Williams
- Lai-Hoong Wong
- David Young

## **EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR BOARD PANELS**

The Board intermittently seeks expressions of interest from suitable physiotherapists who are willing to contribute to Board activities. These activities include participating in Board working groups and assisting with complaints handling processes, such as mentoring other physiotherapists or nominating for committees such as the Physiotherapy Standards Advisory Committee or Tribunals.

Physiotherapists interested in offering assistance are invited to contact the Board for details.

## **TEMPORARY REGISTRATION FOR OVERSEAS TRAINED PHYSIOTHERAPISTS – 2 YEAR REVIEW**

In 2003, responding to significant recruitment difficulties, the Australian Council of Physiotherapy Regulating Authorities (ACOPRA), now the Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC), proposed the establishment of a consistent national approach to limited

registration conditions for overseas trained physiotherapists.

The NSW Physiotherapists Registration Board supported this move by developing a process whereby overseas trained physiotherapists could work for a host employer temporarily up to 12 months, without having to sit for AECOP exams. This was subject to conditions, including supervision. Details are on the Board website [www.physioreg.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.physioreg.health.nsw.gov.au)

Initial uptake was limited, however over the last 12 months there has been a significant increase in applications. Recently the Board's Limited Registration Committee undertook a review of this process.

Between November 2004 and September 2006 the committee received 99 applications from overseas physiotherapists for temporary registration. Of the 99 applications 36 were eligible for automatic approval (under Category A\*). Of the remaining 63 applications (under Category B\*), 44 were granted temporary registration without any special conditions, seven were granted temporary registration with conditions and eight were unsuccessful. There were four withdrawals. Hence 88% of all applicants were granted registration to work in NSW. The Committee has granted temporary registration to physiotherapists from various countries, including United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, USA, Malta, Iran, Zimbabwe, India, Denmark and Belgium. In all cases the decision of the Committee is final.

In assessing each application the Committee reviewed the physiotherapy course at the tertiary institution attended by the applicant to ensure the content of the course was of a standard comparable to Australian requirements. In particular, course content was reviewed for evidence of sufficient study in Cardiopulmonary, Musculoskeletal, Neurological and Electrophysical Agents as well as clinical education.

Evidence of the development of clinical reasoning skills throughout the course was also required. Overall, the committee was looking for evidence that the overseas trained physiotherapist would be able to perform at the same level of competence as a new graduate in NSW. It should be noted that even if the applicant is a recent graduate from countries listed in Category A, registration is not

guaranteed, as some courses from these countries have insufficient undergraduate training in one or more of the core requirements.

The Committee at times encountered problems accessing the required documentation as the physiotherapists had arrived in Australia with insufficient information regarding their course. In light of this the Committee recommends that prospective employers of overseas physiotherapists ensure the physiotherapist applies for temporary registration prior to leaving their country. If they do travel to Australia before applying, they should be advised to bring as much information as possible regarding course content, clinical hours and post graduate experience.

A review undertaken with supervisors of overseas trained registrants indicated that on the whole they were pleased with their performance. About half of the overseas trained physiotherapists were employed in private facilities and half in public hospitals. They treated a wide variety of patient groups, including musculoskeletal, orthopaedics, medical, surgical, neurosurgical, geriatric and rehabilitation. Whilst host employers were generally very positive about the standards of the overseas trained physiotherapists, it was noted that some of the physiotherapists required training in specific protocols, treatments (such as plastering), communications and clinical note taking to attain standards expected in NSW.

The feedback received by the Board is that this process is a positive step in helping to address some of the workforce shortages that have been encountered in recent years. Feedback from the host facilities is vital in ensuring an optimal outcome. In future the Board will be asking hosts to complete a simple questionnaire regarding the overseas physiotherapists so the Board can maximise the benefits of this process.

*\*Category A: persons who qualified from the Republic of Ireland prior to 2003, or persons who qualified in Canada, Hong Kong, South Africa and United Kingdom prior to 2001.*

*\*Category B: persons who do not fall into Category A who hold a physiotherapy qualification. Refer to the Board's website for further details.*

## COMPLAINT SCENARIOS

The NSW Physiotherapists Registration Board continues to receive a number of complaints regarding billing practices of private practitioners. There have been complaints in the last two years concerning:

- Billing for full fees for private hospital treatments where it is alleged that the physiotherapist is only in the room for a short period of time.
- Billing for physiotherapy treatment when a substantial part of the treatment does not involve the registered physiotherapist's input (ie where the patient is treated by a physiotherapy assistant, massage therapist etc, or use of gym equipment in the physiotherapist's rooms).
- Unexpected out of pocket expenses. Most of these complaints are a result of treatments performed in private hospitals where there are standard protocols involving extensive physiotherapy treatment and the patient is not aware of the out of pocket expenses that they are incurring. There have also been complaints concerning gap payments for treatment under the Enhanced Primary Care Program above the Medicare rebate.
- Billing for rehabilitation in an aged care facility that extends over a prolonged period of time without review by all parties concerned (including guardians) on a regular basis.
- False claims for payment, especially to authorities such as Workcover, Department of Veterans' Affairs and Health Funds.

If physiotherapists communicated with patients and/or guardians to ensure that they were aware of the services for which they will be billed, a number of these types of complaints would be easily resolved. It is considered good practice to provide information to patients when they book for elective surgery and to consider separate fees for short consultations.

When billing for physiotherapy treatment, the physiotherapist needs to be aware of the ethical considerations regarding the actual input of the registered physiotherapist. The physiotherapist may need to consider an alternative billing descriptor (eg massage therapy, gym use etc).

The Board views fraudulent claims seriously and, in conjunction with appropriate bodies (ie

the Health Care Complaints Commission), will investigate any serious fraud complaints and take appropriate actions, including suspension or cancellation of the physiotherapist's registration.

## STATISTICS

As at 31 December 2006 a total of 6,713 physiotherapists were registered in NSW. For the period 1 April 2006 to 31 December 2006 there were 131 new registrations, as follows:

24	NSW graduates
6	Interstate graduates
63	Mutual Recognition
32	Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition
6	Overseas graduates

*Copies of the NSW Physiotherapists Act 2001 and Regulations can be obtained:*

1. Online at [www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au).
2. From the Government Information Service Bookshop, SALMAT, Level 3, 2-24 Rawson Place, Sydney NSW 2000.
3. By calling 1300 656 986 and charging to a credit card.

**Visit the NSW Physiotherapists Registration Board website:**

[www.physioreg.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.physioreg.health.nsw.gov.au)T.

