

What is in a Name?

Physiotherapists/physical therapists struggle every day trying to educate their clients and families, service providers and the public in general of the importance of physiotherapy/physical therapy being provided by a registered physiotherapist/physical therapist. Recently, the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario, whose mandate is to protect the public, began a public relations campaign distributing posters ensuring the public is aware that anyone can say they provide physiotherapy services, but only our members are physiotherapists¹. Similarly, in a recent precedent setting case, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania ruled that physical treatment and physical therapy are no longer understood to be interchangeable and synonymous terms². I would like to direct your attention to an editorial from *The Journal of Manual & Manipulative Therapy*³ which provides a synopsis of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania court case. Those interested in obtaining more information may do so by visiting the website at www.swodeam.com.⁴

Winning this major legal battle by our cousins to the South is very exciting news for our profession. As a professional group we can no longer afford to be complacent. It is not enough to simply applaud this court decision, then idly stand by and wait for similar changes to occur in Canada. We should have a vested interest in working as a unified group; providing one strong voice and outlining our stand on this issue to regulators, legislators, government and other decision making bodies. We must remind ourselves of our continuing obligation to inform and protect the public from the misrepresentation that occurs when other health care providers (i.e., Medical doctors, Chiropractors, Athletic Therapists ...etc) claim to provide physiotherapy/physical therapy services. Each year, another group is added to the list of physiotherapy providers.

In summary, I would like to reiterate that the intent of my letter is not to offer solutions, nor even to suggest a possible course of action. Rather I wish to engage physiotherapists/physical therapists in a stimulating discussion. Again, I would like to emphasize that as a professional group we need to move forward on this issue and the sooner the better!

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References:

1. College of Physiotherapists of Ontario 1999 at www.collegept.org
2. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs v. State Board of Physical Therapy, et al., No. 47 M.D. Appeal Docket 1998, Opinion of the Court, April 20, 1999.
3. Medeiros JM. Editorial, Physical Therapy Is Not A Generic Term for Physical Therapy. *J. Manual Manip. Ther.* 1999; 7(3): 111-112.
4. Swodeam Consulting Inc. Clinical and Educational Consultants in Orthopractic / Orthopaedic Physical Therapy at www.swodeam.com