

OPA'S RESPONSE TO REDUCTIONS IN PUBLICLY FUNDED PHYSIOTHERAPY

OPA closely monitors reductions and/or closures of physiotherapy services in the public sector. Reductions and closures affect physiotherapists and patients, the profession as a whole, as well as the entire health care system. When reductions to physiotherapy services are announced the OPA takes a series of steps to advocate on behalf of physiotherapists and their patients. These steps are as follows:

- 1) Inform members of issue via social media:** Members will be informed via Facebook and Twitter on the same day OPA staff become aware of the issue.
- 2) Update tracking document:** The OPA has created a "DPCs and Known Hospital Reductions by LHIN" document that can be found on the OPA members' side of the website. This document is updated on a regular basis to reflect changes. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive; it only includes closures and reductions that the OPA has become aware of through a survey of the membership and environmental scanning.
- 3) Identify publicly-funded alternatives in the community (if available):** Reasoning typically used to justify out-patient closures or reductions is that patients can access the service in the community. Access to publicly-funded physiotherapy in the community is typically limited and strict eligibility criteria or inability to pay for private services can leave patients without care. It is important to know what services are available to patients to gauge the impact the closure will ultimately have.
- 4) Speak with physiotherapy employees at the hospital to acquire additional information:** Communication with front line employees is an extremely valuable way to collect information. While certain facts may have to remain confidential, other information that can be shared has the potential to aid the OPA in their advocacy efforts. If members haven't already done so, the OPA is also available to help individuals get in touch with their local governments on access issues.
- 5) Letter to LHIN/CEO/Board of Directors/Minister of Health and Long Term Care:** Once an adequate amount of information has been gathered a letter will be sent to the LHIN, CEO of the hospital, as well as the Board of Directors and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This letter will outline the OPA's concern over the closure or reduction, the potentially limited capacity of publicly



funded physiotherapy within the LHIN, and an offer to help find alternative solutions to ensure that the community is still receiving necessary access to physiotherapy services.

- 6) Press Release & Iblast:** If local media has not already published a story on the closure or reduction, the OPA will write and submit a press release. Information on the closure or reduction will also be published on the OPA website and members will be informed through an iblast.

If you have any information on physiotherapy service closures or downsizing in your local community, please contact Kate McLeod, Manager, Practice and Policy at katem@opa.on.ca or 416.322.6866 ext 232.