



September 22, 2020

Hon. Doug Ford,
Premier of Ontario

Dr. David Williams,
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Ministry of Health

Via email

RE: Physiotherapy Services and the Second Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Premier Ford and Dr. Williams;

In anticipation of the likelihood of the next wave of the pandemic, the OPA urges you to allow essential health care services to remain open and available to patients who need them. This time, essential services must include all services (in-person, virtual, for acute and chronic injuries, illnesses and conditions) provided by physiotherapists and physiotherapist assistants working in all sectors of the health system, including acute care, emergency rooms, intensive care units, rehabilitation centres, complex continuing care, long-term care homes and retirement residences, home care, primary health care, and clinics in communities across Ontario.

Following the changes to Directive #2 that enabled the re-opening of the services provided by physiotherapists and physiotherapist assistants, our members have been safely providing services across the health system as per the structural and infection prevention and control measures required by the CMOH. ***We have demonstrated that the physiotherapy profession can provide services safely in-person. Physiotherapy practices have not been a source of community spread.***

We have all learned a lot since the restrictions began in March 2020. We know that, in the absence of access to physiotherapy, Ontarians have suffered, experiencing deterioration in their conditions and health outcomes. We know that without physiotherapy, patients who had undergone joint replacement and other surgeries just prior to the pandemic had no access to essential rehabilitation. Residents in long-term care homes, retirement residences, and those receiving care in their own homes, experienced loss of function as the physiotherapist and/or physiotherapist assistant was prohibited from providing the care necessary to keep them moving as independently as possible and to remain safely in their homes.

Physiotherapy services in the community, including privately and publicly funded clinic-based care, must remain open to continue to respond to the growing and urgent needs of patients in Ontario who are suffering from pain and disability and need physiotherapy in areas including, but not limited to;

- Access to the full continuum of care required for their conditions after hospitalization, not just after surgeries or “procedures”, but also for other chronic and acute conditions, including recovering from COVID-19.
- Treatment to manage debilitating pain and mobility issues, which inevitably worsen with delays in obtaining care in the community. Without access to physiotherapy, these patients either seek help in emergency departments or face long-term limitations.
- Programs and treatments for WSIB worker claimants who require in-person services, so workers can return to their jobs, or to their full workplace duties.
- Injuries after motor vehicle accidents, whose treatments were limited by the unavailability of in-person care, or where in-person care was inaccessible due to insurer-imposed limitations on virtual care.

As regulated health care professionals, we are held to a much higher standard of infection prevention, adherence to public health directives and patient safety compared to other businesses and industries. We have the knowledge, skills and judgement and can be relied upon to apply rigorously the standards for which we are held legally accountable. As a profession, we want to continue to safely provide physiotherapy services that are essential to the health of Ontarians and our communities.

We are available to meet to discuss any questions you may have and thank you for all you are doing during this pandemic.

Yours sincerely,



Paulette Gardiner Millar
President