



Physiotherapy-led multidisciplinary collaborative models of care

Physiotherapy-led models integrated into multidisciplinary PHN collaborative care enhance patient outcomes and access. Physiotherapists contribute across multiple care settings from acute, subacute to post-acute and preventive and non-operative care, and treatments in the community. Focusing on physical and mental health interplay and formalising funding can optimise care. Here, we provide just some examples of collaborative models in chronic pain, osteoarthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, dementia rehabilitation and falls prevention.

1. Multidisciplinary treatment for chronic pain



Physiotherapy is central to the treatment of **chronic pain** as part of a multidisciplinary approach to pain management.

To expand the treatment pathway, new evidence-based treatment strategies that include multidisciplinary **pain management** interventions are needed.

A multidisciplinary approach incorporating **several specialities** within the **pain clinic** is recommended.

General practitioner

Physiotherapist

Psychologist

Treatment primarily focuses on the biopsychosocial model:

Part of the clinician's skill is to decide which part(s) of this biopsychosocial model influence the patient's pain.

The average net benefit of treating back pain with physiotherapy is estimated to be **\$6063** per episode of care.

Nous Group (2020), Value of Physiotherapy in Australia.



Proven models of care leveraging physiotherapy clinical leadership

Multiple models of care for chronic pain have been successful in PHNs, utilising a physiotherapist as a core provider. Within the multidisciplinary team, the physiotherapist will lead diagnostics, education, and delivery of non-pharmaceutical, non-surgical pain management for patients living with chronic pain.

2. Multidisciplinary model of care for osteoarthritis



Physiotherapy is central to the treatment of **osteoarthritis** as part of a multidisciplinary approach to management of disability and pain.

Multidisciplinary osteoarthritis education interventions pave the way to a more comprehensive approach to managing this condition.

Physiotherapists, as part of the multidisciplinary team, have the diagnostic and clinical skills to assess suitability for inclusion in osteoarthritis programs and individual support.

General practitioner

Physiotherapist

Dietitian



Treatment primarily focuses on the biopsychosocial model:

Osteoarthritis has a significant burden of disease with symptoms that include pain, joint swelling/stiffness and an associated loss of mobility. Physiotherapy-led osteoarthritis programs are cost-effective as an alternative to other interventions such as surgery and medication. The average net benefit of treating osteoarthritis of the knee and hip with physiotherapy is estimated to be **\$3772** per episode of care.

Nous Group (2020), Value of Physiotherapy in Australia.

A physiotherapy-led multidisciplinary team approach to the management of osteoarthritis has proven models of care such as the GLA:D® Program in Australia. These types of osteoarthritic knee and hip programs consist of high value, evidence-based, exercise and lifestyle components.

3. Multidisciplinary care in chronic airway diseases



Physiotherapy is a key component of multidisciplinary chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) management, with treatment decreasing exacerbations and preventing hospitalisation.

For those with COPD, multidisciplinary pulmonary rehabilitation decreases shortness of breath as well as improving levels of fatigue and quality of life. However, the lack of programs in primary care limits access for many Australians. A community-based approach to pulmonary rehabilitation could include these health disciplines:

General practitioner

Physiotherapist

Pharmacist

Respiratory nurse

Occupational therapist

Treatment focuses on tailored exercise prescription and education:

Physiotherapists are able to prescribe, monitor and progress treatment based on a patient's presentation.



Physiotherapy-led exercise prescription is a key component of pulmonary rehabilitation programs

Physiotherapy-led pulmonary rehabilitation programs are integrated into Australia's public hospital system. These programs generally run for eight weeks and provide a combination of exercise and health education aimed at supporting those with chronic pulmonary conditions, such as COPD, to independently manage their condition.

4. Multidisciplinary dementia rehabilitation



Physiotherapy is a key part of a holistic post-diagnostic dementia support pathway.

Home-based programs address environmental and functional risks, help improve memory, executive function and everyday problem solving.

To improve access to preventive and early post-diagnostic evidence-based multidisciplinary care underpinned by education for healthcare professionals to increase knowledge of dementia rehabilitation.

General practitioner

Physiotherapist

Psychologist

Occupational therapist

Speech pathologist

Treatment primarily focuses on enablement and reablement:

Physiotherapists prescribe tailored, purposeful activities to support the physical and cognitive needs of people living with dementia.

Dementia is associated with an increased risk of falls

Exercise interventions that include balance and functional training may be effective in preventing falls.



Proven models of care leveraging physiotherapy clinical leadership

While clinically recommended in most literature, there are currently few options to access multidisciplinary care. In particular, care to maintain physical health and prevent deterioration is limited outside of acute settings.

There is now good evidence for physiotherapy interventions, such as the Sunbeam Program, in improving mobility, slowing cognitive decline, psychological function and reducing falls in people with dementia.



5. Multidisciplinary falls prevention at home



Falls, falls-related fractures and hospitalisation can be prevented in community-dwelling older people and help them remain independent at home longer.

Leading cause of **preventable death** in older people.



Care in the home or aged care facility including in physiotherapy-led falls prevention is needed to address the accelerating problem of falls in older adults.

General practitioner

Physiotherapist

Occupational therapist

Treatment focuses on assessment, tailored individualised exercise prescription, home modifications and education to minimise falls risks:

Physiotherapists are experts in maintaining and improving mobility; falls prevention and reduction and minimising harm from falls. They also provide high value care managing comorbidities that contribute to falls such as incontinence and dizziness.

The total net benefit of physiotherapy-led falls prevention programs is **\$1320** per falls episode.

Nous Group (2020), Value of Physiotherapy in Australia.



PATIENT BENEFITS

Physiotherapy **improves balance**, leading to fewer falls, resulting in fewer injuries.

Reduces chances of injury

Greatly benefits health and prevents further injury

Delays admission to residential care



Physiotherapy also helps to:

- Avoid surgery
- Improve mobility
- Manage age-related issues
- Manage heart and lung disease



Proven models of care leveraging physiotherapy clinical leadership

The evidence-based Otago Exercise Program can be adapted and delivered in-home and via telehealth to ensure the preferences and biopsychosocial factors of over 75s are considered and environmental risks addressed. The Sunbeam Program is another proven intensive group therapy program that can be leveraged in primary care.

A comprehensive approach to healthcare integrates innovative physiotherapy-led models, focusing on chronic pain, and conditions such as osteoarthritis, COPD and dementia, and in preventive measures including falls prevention. By fostering multidisciplinary collaboration, we aim to enhance patient outcomes and expand access to essential care across various settings.

Together, we can provide new care models that can accelerate multidisciplinary collaborative care integration.

For more information on how physiotherapy can support multidisciplinary care in your community, please reach out to the APA's Policy and Government Relations team. You can contact Bronwyn Darmanin or Lowana Williams at policy@australian.physio

