



AUSTRALIAN
PHYSIOTHERAPY
ASSOCIATION



APA ADVOCACY NEWS

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Developing news

Mental health in the spotlight

The Productivity Commission Inquiry Report on Mental Health released this week has identified the clear links between poor physical health and mental health conditions. Physiotherapy is ideally positioned to deliver vital support in a person-centred approach.

The APA joins calls for improvements in the ways GPs connect Australians with other services within and beyond the health system. Neglect of physical health care was specifically identified by the Productivity Commission Inquiry Report into Mental Health. The report found that “Mental ill-health affects all Australians either directly or indirectly. Almost one in five Australians has experienced mental illness in a given year. Many do not receive the treatment and support they need. As a result, too many people experience preventable physical and mental distress, disruptions in education and employment, relationship breakdown, stigma, and loss of life satisfaction and opportunities.”

It was noted that health professionals can neglect people’s physical health once they have been diagnosed with mental illness.

Further details: [Report](#), [APA media release](#)

Meanwhile, registrations are filling fast for APA’s Mental Health First Aid (blended learning) course, presented by the chair of APA’s National Mental Health Special Interest Group, Associate Professor Joanna Connaughton.

The first two courses held were sell outs and this last course for 2020, being held 2-9 December, is almost full.

Further details: [APA PD](#)

With you all the way - early bird membership discounts end soon

Thank you to all physiotherapists who put in star performances as part of the APA’s membership renewal campaign.

The campaign connects us with the commitment, professionalism, achievement and warmth the profession is renowned for. And acts as a reminder about the true value of being part of the APA community- the endless support that the APA and its 29,100 members give each other.

Renew your 2021 APA membership now by 30 November 2020 and take advantage of our 15% Early Bird discount. Conditions apply.

Use the code WITHYOU2021 at the checkout.

Further details: [Early bird discount](#)

Latest advocacy and emerging issues

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

The APA is a member of the Close the Gap Steering Committee, a collaboration of peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous health bodies working together to achieve equality in health and life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Last week the Committee met to discuss topics including the new agreement on Closing the Gap, institutional racism and non-government organisations and the 2021 Close the Gap report.

This was the first meeting of the Close the Gap Steering Committee under the new terms of reference for the Campaign's Indigenous Leadership Group (ILG). The new terms of reference highlight the role of the ILG in providing overarching leadership and management of the Close the Gap campaign and ensuring directions and decisions are made by and in accordance with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Ahpra have released their inaugural Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2020-2025 (Employment Strategy) with the goal of increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation within Ahpra.

The Employment Strategy is a key deliverable of the National Scheme's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy 2020–2025, which aims to improve health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by improving cultural safety, increase workforce participation and improving access to health services.

Further details: [media release](#)

Aged care

The APA has made a submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety responding to the Counsel Assisting's proposed final recommendations. The Counsel Assisting made 124 wide-ranging recommendations, some of which echoed principles the APA has advocated for. They also included recommendations specific to allied health, including physiotherapy.

The APA has recently distributed two media releases in response to Royal Commission papers: Survey of Aged Care Residents and Counsel Assisting's final report and recommendations. This has resulted in an Australian Ageing Agenda article featuring the APA's response to the proposed final recommendations.

We attended the National Aged Care Alliance quarterly meeting this week contributing to its response to the Counsel Assisting's report. We advocated to ensure embedding allied health throughout the aged care system is prioritised. We also met with Prof Kathy Eagar, Director Australian Health Services Research Institute and architect of the AN-ACC funding model, to pursue issues on physiotherapy in residential aged care.

Further details: [APA submission](#), [Australian Ageing Agenda](#), [APA media releases](#)

Other aged care news

New research commissioned by the Royal Commission into Aged Care has shown many people in non-metropolitan regions move more than 100km, or drive for more than 60 minutes, from their home when they begin permanent residential aged care or use respite in an aged care facility.

Further details: [How far do people move to access aged care? report](#)

More Good days, an online Reablement Community of Practice for Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) service providers, has been launched by the Federal Department of Health.

It is designed to be an online forum tool for CHSP providers to learn, share and engage with other providers across the CHSP sector.

Further details: [More Good Days](#)

The Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line has received additional funding to be extended until 30 June 2021 to ensure senior Australians get the services and assistance they need during COVID-19. Between 22 April and 23 October 2020, the support line received more than 5,000 inbound calls and provided more than 29,000 outbound calls.

The support service is a joint initiative of COTA Australia, Dementia Australia, National Seniors Australia and the Older Persons Advocacy Network. The expansion of the service will also include support from the Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care Alliance.

Senior Australians who would like information and support are encouraged to contact the Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line on 1800 171 866, Monday to Friday between 8:30am to 6pm AEDT (excluding public holidays).

The Guiding Principles for Victorian residential aged care, designed to lower COVID infection risks and in place since July 2020, will end on 30 November 2020 in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire.

Further details: [Department of Health website](#).

Compensables

NSW

The APA has recently met with SIRA to discuss their proposed fee reforms for physiotherapists. This is part of a broader series of reforms to the NSW Workers Compensation and CTP schemes proposed by SIRA.

SIRA have advised that the fee reform is a response to an escalation of treatment costs over recent years, a lack of parity with other schemes and declining return to work rates.

The proposed amendments, to take effect on 1 January 2021, include:

- complete withdrawal of the complex consult (PTA005) and work-related activity assessment and treatment (PTA013) codes
- an expectation that almost all consults will fall within a newly defined Consultation A and B service type (see definition and the fee attributable to each code within the attached documents)
- continuation of telehealth codes associated with Consult A and B service types
- further consultation on withdrawal of the home visit codes
- separation of the Case Conference and Report Writing codes (note that report writing code can only be used when requested by the insurer), and
- further delineation of 'severe injury' for which the practitioner is to negotiate fees with the insurer.

The APA is seeking your feedback and recommendations in regard to the fee reforms by Friday 27 November 2020 to assist with our submission to SIRA.

Further details: feedback and queries to jenny.robertson@australian.physio

Compensable training - certification - an opportunity to communicate and collaborate

As a profession SIRA has given us the opportunity to extend our scope of practice and ultimately do more for our patients. The conversations and communications with the treating doctor regarding certification and return to work are integral to this

The session will cover:

- review certification principles and the practical process
- hear from a GP what information they need from physios
- ways to use certification to market yourself or your clinic
- building stronger relationships
- useful templates written by experts in the field
- hear common questions answered on the night and the opportunity to ask your own

Further details: [APA website](#)

Digital health

As part of their work with the Australian Digital Health Agency, AHPA is conducting a survey of allied health practitioners about their use of digital health technology. Results of the survey will help inform the Agency about the software needs of the allied health sector to engage with platforms such as My Health Record and secure messaging.

Participants will be able to enter the prize draw to win one of four \$250 Prepaid Visa Cards.

The survey closes on Monday, 30 November 2020.

Further details: [survey](#)

Private Health Insurance

Bupa is updating its Ancillary Provider Terms – “Terms” - from 1 February 2021. (the following information has been provided by BUPA to help to explain what this means)

What are they?

- As a physiotherapist recognised by Bupa for the purposes of paying a benefit for services you provide to Bupa customers, the “Terms” govern your relationship with Bupa. They apply every time you provide a service to a Bupa customer who wants to claim for that service under their Bupa policy.
- They were developed to promote best practice, customer care and safety and also support the rules under which Bupa operates (Private Health Insurance Act) and the codes of conduct put in place by regulators such as AHPRA.

What’s changed?

- Bupa used to have two separate “Terms” – one for the dentists and allied health professionals and one for practitioners in unregulated professions such as natural therapies. They now have one overarching set of Terms.
- Telehealth – these new clauses relate to the treatment of Bupa customers using Telehealth
- Bupa Customers – these new clauses cover informed consent, informed financial consent, parental/legal guardian consent for treatment of a minor
- Benefit Recovery – these new clauses give Bupa the right to recover benefits in certain circumstances, for example where it can’t be substantiated that services have actually been provided to a Bupa customer as no or inadequate clinical records exist
- Suspension, Termination and Consideration of recognition after suspension – these new and updated clauses now allow the practitioner to terminate their relationship with Bupa

with two month's notice (as well as allowing Bupa to terminate the relationship with two month's notice).

- New clauses also allow for review of a provider's recognition status where the relationship with Bupa has previously been suspended or terminated.
- Clinical Record Keeping Requirements – these updated clauses further clarify Bupa's requirements and are aligned with professional Board and industry requirements.

Further details: [Bupa](#) or contact 1800 931 194 or providerfeedback@bupa.com.au.

COVID-19

The APA and AHPA have strongly advocated on behalf of the physiotherapy profession and allied health to ensure continuity of safe practice via telehealth and face-to-face since the onset of COVID-19.

We are in continued regular contact with State Chief Allied Health Officers, the Minister for Health and relevant departments. While it is pleasingly we are moving to a "new normal" across the country, we are working hard to keep our South Australian members updated in light of the new lockdown.

South Australia Restrictions

The South Australian Chief Allied Health Officer has advise that private practices can remain open and operate if providing services by telehealth only. Those not offering services by telehealth must close for the duration of the six-day 'circuit breaker' period.

It has been confirmed that the following rules will apply to allied health professionals during the 'circuit breaker' period:

Those exempt from the current six-day order:

- allied health professionals working as essential workers in hospitals providing critical clinical care or as directed by the hospital
- allied health professionals working in private practice providing care through telehealth and other virtual care options
- allied health professionals providing mental health services, being provided in hospital or telehealth, and
- students, medical/nursing/midwifery/ allied health on placement providing essential care in hospitals or through telehealth.

Those not exempt from six-day order:

- any other allied health professionals other than above, and
- any students other than the above.

HR in practice have provided us with a workplace relations update to support members during the 'circuit breaker' restrictions. These can be found on our website.

Further details: [website](#)

Physiotherapists who work in RACF are able to continue to provide services in these settings. Physiotherapists must adhere to PPE and infection control requirements of the RACF, inform the RACF in advance of any other sites visited and maintain a record of different facilities visited to assist in tracking if needed.

NDIS and disability

Updates to the NDIS Price guide were announced on the 17 November 2020.

Further details: [website](#)

Submissions

- We have provided a submission to DSS on the National Disability Strategy.
- The APA will provide a submission to DSS on the NDS and NDIS Outcomes Framework

JMF grant

The Confidence in Disability Management course is now available for the first round of registrants. The course is equivalent to five hours of CPD and there are a limited number of free places available. Expressions of interest for the course are still being accepted.

For more information, and to register for the course: [course registration](#)

The filming for the awareness campaign has now been completed. Editing and final production will continue over the next few weeks. The final awareness campaign should be publicly released in mid-December.

Paediatrics

The APA was invited to a consultation with the NDIA and Nous Group on the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) Reset Project.

Further details: [website](#)

This week the APA met with AHPA and other peak bodies to brainstorm future advocacy opportunities and approaches. Ongoing conversations will be held in the coming months to develop a position statement for ECEI advocacy.

Telehealth

The APA held the second round table on 12 November 2020. The round table had a range of stakeholders at the discussion which focused on two particular topics:

- funding and sustainable support for telehealth for improved access and outcomes
- ensuring safety and quality of telehealth delivery within allied health professions

Presentations were given by APA Board Director and gerontological physiotherapist Rik Dawson on telehealth in aged care and SARRAH CEO Cath Maloney on telehealth in remote and rural communities. University of Melbourne also presented on its development of international telehealth guidelines for physiotherapists.

Earlier this year, University of Melbourne, in collaboration with researchers at University of Queensland and Flinders University, invited Australian physiotherapists to participate in a Physiotherapy Research Foundation funded project which investigated the effectiveness of telehealth by physiotherapists in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project involves clinicians, telehealth experts, business owners and funding bodies. It has engaged 212 physiotherapists and 388 patients and the first round of surveys have been completed.

Further details: [interim findings](#)

Resources

Report: Rethinking aged care: emphasising the rights of older Australians

Further details: [Grattan Institute Report](#).

Webinar: Vic Health - launch updated guide Healthy Persuasion: crafting health promotion messages that resonate. You'll hear about the new insights from our 2020 research, as well as from the people who are using these insights to structure their communications to effectively advocate for change. Thursday 3 December, 10am-11.30am.

Further details: [Register](#)