

PUBLICLY FUNDED FIRST CONTACT PHYSIOTHERAPY (FCP)

What is publicly funded First Contact Physiotherapy?

In Australia, physiotherapists are already first contact practitioners—you don't need a referral from a GP to seek care from a physiotherapist. Physiotherapists are appropriately qualified Ahpra-regulated autonomous clinical practitioners who are able to assess, diagnose, treat and discharge a person without a medical referral – where appropriate.

However, in our current system, there is a lack of publicly funded direct access to physiotherapy in Primary Care. In a funded FCP model of care, patients can see a physiotherapist first in a primary care setting and receive the care they need while avoiding out-of-pocket costs.

FCP already operates to some extent within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), some Emergency Departments (EDs), and overseas. To date, a publicly funded model of First Contact Physiotherapy has not been piloted in primary care in Australia.

Why is it important?

Absence of publicly funded access to physiotherapy in Primary Care means that Australians are missing out on better and faster access to diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal (MSK) pain and conditions.

This is particularly critical for the 7 million of Australians who live with a musculoskeletal condition. This is also important because of the burden and cost of MSK conditions to the health system as a whole and beyond (including in loss of productivity costs).



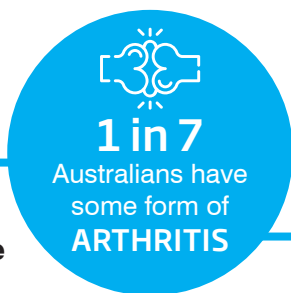
Disease prevalence

7 MILLION

Almost

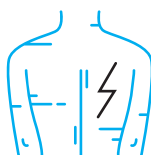
1 in 3

(30%) Australians



In 2011, MSK conditions
were responsible for

12%
OF THE TOTAL BURDEN OF
DISEASE AND INJURY IN AUSTRALIA



BACK PAIN is the most
common MSK condition
effecting 16% of the population
and the 2nd leading cause of
overall disease burden



MSK conditions
result in a
\$9.2 BILLION
direct health cost
and further costs
from reduced
productivity


KEY BENEFITS

There is a wealth of clinical evidence of the benefits of seeing a physiotherapist for patients presenting with musculoskeletal pain or condition.




CONSUMERS


+ Timely access to high quality, coordinated care appropriate to their condition




FASTER ACCESS
to diagnosis, treatment and care for MSK problems




BETTER CARE
Longer, more in-depth appointments with fewer 'pathways' to medical care




WELLNESS MODEL
Enhanced opportunities to address physical / lifestyle issues




INCREASED CLINICAL LEADERSHIP
Better time-management GPs + upskilling of GPs in MSK issues



REDUCED COSTS
Broader savings to healthcare



REDUCED PRESCRIBING
Reduced Opioid prescribing for MSK conditions



IMAGING EFFICIENCIES
More efficient use of imaging

What is the APA's plan?

The focus on publicly funded **First Contact Physiotherapy** (FCP) is part of the value build in strengthening our call for a stronger role for physiotherapy in the health system. It is part of the suite of solutions we explore to elevate the place of physiotherapy in the health system.

Publicly funded FCP has the potential to improve the patient journey, make the health system more efficient and efficacious, generate savings to the health budget, and increase accessibility and affordable care for all Australians.

OUR SOLUTION:

A 10-year roadmap to physiotherapists as Medicare funded First Contact Practitioners in Primary Health Care in Australia

Timeline	Stages
Year 1	A systematic cohort and evidence base assessment, and environment scan looking at both domestic and international examples.
Year 1 and 2	A consultation of the Primary Health Care sector and workshops to develop a detailed model (or models) for a pilot.
Year 3 and 4	A scalable pilot program to trial publicly funded First Contact Physiotherapy in a variety of settings and locations – with specific attention to rural and regional areas. A Measurement and Evaluation Plan of the pilot with the view of a national roll out.
Year 5	An implementation Plan for a national roll out within the next 5 years.
Year 10	First Contact Physiotherapy is publicly funded in Primary Health Care in Australia

WHAT DO WE WANT?

We want the Government to:

- lead the work on the 10-year roadmap to achieve publicly funded First Contact Physiotherapy;
 - invest in the development of a model suited to the Australian context; and to
 - fund a pilot to trial the First Contact Physiotherapy (FCP) model in Australia, within 2 to 3 years.
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