

**COLLEGE OF PHYSICAL THERAPISTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**ADVISORY STATEMENT**

**Number 3**

**Effective: April 1, 2008**

Replaces: September 16, 2000

**OBSERVATION OF/JOB SHADOWING A PHYSICAL THERAPIST BY A NON-PHYSICAL THERAPY STUDENT**

Physical therapists may receive requests from a lay person, most often an applicant of a physical therapy program or a high school student completing a career preparation course, to observe physical therapy practice. Physical therapists who wish to provide observational or shadowing experiences should be aware that rules and regulations on observation or job shadowing a physical therapist will vary from workplace to workplace. Be advised that in some workplaces observation or shadowing of a physical therapist is not permitted. Consideration should be given as to whether liability insurance or WCB coverage is required for a student observing or shadowing a physical therapist.

1. The student is to be provided with a general orientation to physical therapy including confidentiality policies, safety procedures, appropriate dress and demeanour, and a tour of the clinic or facility.
2. The physical therapist responsible for the student is advised to reinforce the absolute necessity for complete confidentiality throughout the observational experience. Students should sign a confidentiality agreement which indicates that any breach of the agreement will result in termination of the observational experience.
3. Observational or shadowing experiences are limited to observation and at no point is it acceptable for a student to operate equipment or to provide care to a patient.
4. Students must not be exposed to situations of any risk of harm.
5. Students should not be present during the physical therapist's initial contact with the patient.
6. The supervising physical therapist must obtain the patient's informed consent for student observation for each and every encounter with the patient, in order to allow the patient to re-visit the consent decision. The patient's response is to be recorded in their clinical record.
7. Students are to be identified and introduced accurately (e.g., high school student) in order to prevent confusion with an employee of the clinic or facility, or misrepresentation of the student's status.
8. The presence of a student must not interfere with, or impede the physical therapist/patient interaction.
9. Students may not observe any interaction that is private, invasive, or sensitive in nature.
10. Students are not to have access to a patient's clinical records.