

COLLEGE OF PHYSICAL THERAPISTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

PRACTICE STANDARD

Number 6

Effective: April 1, 2008

Replaces: September 1, 2006

December 1996

January 1994

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

College Bylaws forbid a sexual relationship between a physical therapist and a patient.

There exists an imbalance of power, authority and control in all patient/physical therapist relationships. The physical therapist is responsible for maintaining professional boundaries.

According to College Bylaws "professional misconduct of a sexual nature" includes:

- (a) sexual intercourse or other forms of physical sexual relations between the registrant and the patient,
- (b) touching, of a sexual nature, of the patient by the registrant, or
- (c) behaviour or remarks of a sexual nature by the registrant towards the patient, but does not include touching, behaviour and remarks by the registrant towards the patient that are of a clinical nature appropriate to the service being provided.

A physical therapist must:

1. Maintain a professional relationship when dealing with patients in all circumstances.
2. Explain all procedures thoroughly and obtain informed consent.
3. Respect the patient's right to withdraw consent at any time.
4. Respect an individual's sensitivity to personal space, religious and cultural beliefs, values and lifestyles.
5. Stop the procedure if the patient demonstrates unease and only proceed if patient consent has been re-established.
6. Ensure ongoing level of understanding and the patient's continued consent.
7. Refrain from entering into a close personal relationship with a former patient unless:
 - a reasonable period of time has elapsed since the patient was discharged from physical therapy treatment.
 - the physical therapist is reasonably satisfied that the power differential inherent in a therapeutic relationship no longer exists.
 - the physical therapist reasonably believes the patient is not dependent on them.

Additional Resources:

College of Health Disciplines (UBC). Division of Health Care Communication at <http://www.health-disciplines.ubc.ca/DHCC/prof/resources.htm>.

College of Physical Therapists of Alberta. Therapeutic relationships: establishing and maintaining professional boundaries. Edmonton: College of Physical Therapists of Alberta; 2007.

College of Physical Therapists of BC. Bylaws: Professional Misconduct, section 53(1)(c).

College of Physiotherapists of Ontario. Standards for Professional Practice. Establishing and maintaining therapeutic relationships. Toronto: College of Physiotherapists of Ontario; 2007.

College of Physiotherapists of Ontario. Standards for Professional Practice. Managing challenging relationships. Toronto: College of Physiotherapists of Ontario; 2006.

Crossing the Boundaries – Committee on Physician Sexual Misconduct. College of Physicians & Surgeons of BC.

For information on informed consent see the *Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admission) Act* at www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/H/96181_01.htm and the *Infant's Act* at www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/I/96223_01.htm.

Sexual Misconduct – A Reality in Physiotherapy. Peter Noel-Bentley. CPA 1993.