



Citizens Advisory Group Report

Saturday February 13, 2016—10 am until 4 pm

Facilitator: Misha Glouberman

Topics for Discussion

At the beginning of the meeting, the facilitator encouraged the group to discuss their goals, their expectations, their concerns and the norms for their meeting.

The Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) proposed the following topics for discussion:

- What are the opportunities and challenges for the College to earn the trust of the public?
- How the College fosters, protects and ensures patient safety?
- How do we raise awareness?
- How does social media affect the work of the College, profession and PT for good or bad
- Working with other Colleges
- Making public awareness a key part of the College's role

The CAG discussed the topics above, and below are the themes that emerged:

Educating the Public about the College

The need to let the public know what the College does and its role in protecting the public

The CAG asked: "What do people really know about the College's role?" The group reiterated that the public needs to understand the role of the College.

The group mentioned that the public should know that the College has a website, registered professionals and mandatory requirements. The public should also be aware of the Public Register.

"The public should know that there's somewhere to look for a PT and to not only rely on a referral by a doctor or a friend."— CAG member

The group also stated the need to promote the College's zero tolerance statement.

The Need to Counter Misconceptions about the College's Role

The CAG implied that there may be skepticism by the public towards the College; who do they really serve— the patient or the PT? The group stated: "The public thinks the Colleges defend their members." They recommended countering the public assumption that the College will protect members first, as stated by one of the participants: "How can you trust the fox to take care of the chickens?"

"The public thinks that Colleges defends their members."—CAG member

The Need to Educate the Public about Self-Regulation

The CAG suggested that that the public may not fully understand what self-regulation means. The group stated that, “The public requires an overarching statement about self-regulation. The public doesn’t really get what self-regulation means.”

“Self-regulation is a concept that needs to be explained.”— CAG member

The CAG also spoke of the need to justify self-regulation to the public. The group suggested making the link for the public that: “When integrity is protected then the patient is protected.”

“When integrity is protected then the patient is protected.”— CAG member

Making the Case for the Public

To engage the public, the CAG recommended telling the public “What’s in it for them.”

*“If you’re trying to engage the public, we must promote what it is that we do for the public”
—CAG member*

The groups suggested public-focused messages that would help patients feel more engaged; messages that interests the public. “For example,” one member said, “did you know that the College does so-and-and so to protect patients?” One participant suggested to make it known that “we are here for you.” Another member stated that “to attract the public’s attention, we ought to promote the College as the protector of the patient.” Other expressions shared by group members included: “The watchdog of the patient” and “We’ve got your back.”

Finally, the CAG stated that the public “just needs to know that the College exists”. It’s all about protection of the patient. The group suggested that patient needs to know that there is a protective body for them to come to, and that the College is there to protect the public.

How College Fosters/Protects and Ensures Patient Safety—Through its Activities

The CAG asked, Lisa Pretty, Communications Director, to review the College’s roles and functions. Lisa reviewed the College’s various departments and activities.

The group spoke about the College’s need to better promote the College’s activities, especially how it directly affects the public. The group suggested publicizing the various programs of the College. They suggested to “highlight all the work that’s being done— the Public Register, transparency, all the work...majority of people don’t know about it.”

Ensuring the Competence of Physiotherapists

The CAG was highly in favor of the Registration program, and much of the conversation was around the College's role of ensuring the competence of physiotherapists.

The group stressed the need to communicate to the public what the College does to ensure competence of physiotherapists. They stated the value in making the public aware of the College's role in guaranteeing the level of competence of PTs.

They stated that the public doesn't understand the training and level of a PT, and suggested that "if the public knew that PTs had to pass "X" levels to practice, this would be helpful."

The group suggested messaging such as:

- Did you know PTs need to be registered?
- Did you know that accreditation and registration is mandatory for all PTs?
- What does it take to be a licenced PT?

Practice Advisor

The CAG suggested raising the public's awareness of the role of Practice Advisor, "the person involved full time for patients to call," and its importance to the public. The group stated that it seems that the Practice Advisor is more tailored to calls from professionals, and the group suggested that patients should also call—and that patients need to know that this service is available.

The group suggested changing the name "Practice Advisor" to "Patient/Practice Advisor."

The Standards of Professional Practice

The group suggested highlighting the Standards for Professional Practice. They recognized the role of the Standards in patient safety and recommended highlighting what the College does to ensure patient safety.

The Importance of Public Engagement and including the Patient's Voice

The CAG emphasized the importance of the public's or patient's perspective and recommended ways to include the patient's or public's voice. They stated that patients have first-hand experience that is invaluable. Because of their experiences, they recommended the College consider the patient perspective, not the College's perspective. They stated that the College should be a steward, and should practice good patient engagement.

They stated the need for more patients to be involved in the patient safety issues, and in the Standards for Professional Practice.

"How can the College be instrumental in mitigating patient issues?"—CAG Member

They suggested engaging the public by broadly asking: "Tell us about your experience with safety in physiotherapy." They emphasized the need for a hook!

The group also suggested that The College should focus on any complaints/reports.

Social Media and Raising Awareness

College's Role in Raising Awareness

The CAG stated that the College plays an integral role in raising awareness, because "it's never going to happen through the PT's office," the group said.

The perception of the group is that protection of the public is a mandatory role for the College, because, according to one member, "the PT would not have an interest to protect the public."

Role of Social Media in Raising Awareness

The Group recognized and promoted the value of social media in raising public's awareness. As one member stated, one of the reasons is that "it's free and it's efficient." Another participant claimed:

"Social media is a powerful great way to get the message out there and better than newspaper. The College of Physiotherapists of Ontario can put out an authoritative voice. The College can correct misinformation... Blogging is another great way."—CAG Member

The discussion on social media was primarily around the messages that the College should convey to the public.

Tailoring Social Media to the Public

There was a concern that the College's social media (such as Twitter) is neither representative of the patient voice nor tailored to the public.

"Unfortunately now [the Twitter messages] aim at PTs primarily and not the public and are very DRY in terms of content. There should be public-oriented tweeting, instead of all towards the physiotherapists. Try to re-tweet and get it spread it around. Make it interesting!"
—CAG Member

The group recommended that messages from the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario "should be clear and representative of what citizens have said." However, the group also stated that they view the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario differently:

"College of Physiotherapists of Ontario seems to be different and incorporates the voice of the public more than other Colleges."—CAG Member

The CAG suggested that the way to engage patients is through a relevant or current topic, as opposed to a general overview of the regulator. They suggested that current topics would be helpful and make the public become engaged. They recommended hosting online discussions about a "hot issue." One member stated: "start the chat and see what people are saying!"

"Patient engagement makes the College's message grow. Out of context messages will be ignored, so make it relevant."—CAG Member

Language

They suggested using language that would engage the public, and generally more plain-language.

"The College can't call things by their proper name—jurisprudence, public won't know what you mean. No jargon. Patient language only."—CAG Member

They stated that the College might want to change the language when we communicate with the public.

- The new movement of patient engagement is towards an equal partnership between the patient and the doctor— "client" could be a better use.
- Changing the lingo—the word "patient" versus "client"/"public"/"citizen"

Live Tweeting to Engage the Public

They suggested live tweeting to increase public engagement and conversation with the College.

“The College of Physiotherapists of Ontario could have a twitter chat. Pick a hashtag, publicize and determine a time and public can interact with the College. Maybe 10% of entire population would engage.”—CAG Member

The group also suggested to live tweet the CAG meetings!

Other Recommendations

The group also provided other concrete recommendations which include using various formats to disseminate news or information from the College, including:

- Website for all of the 26 Colleges
- Translating material into other languages
- Podcasts
- Case studies
- Narratives or stories with contact information on social media
- Brochures in multiple languages

The group also recommended surveying both the public and PTs for their experiences or attitudes, and to compare the results of the public with those of PTs to see how they relate to each other.

Another popular recommendation by the group was providing incentives to increase public engagement, and to create contests for people to contribute their feedback.

Other avenues for public outreach include hosting a conference, or workshops at universities, share personal stories of patient experiences (through video or otherwise). The group stated that stories or narratives are more memorable than a professor speaking.

The group also recommended that the College participates in other outreach activities such as: open houses and informal seminars at retirement homes long term care and nursing homes; and health shows. They suggested speaking and connecting with other stakeholder groups as information conduits. For example, the CAG suggested speaking to doctors and nurses in schools, unions, employers, PROBUS, WSIB, etc. They also suggested collaborating with insurance providers; for example, including a line on an insurance provider’s website promoting College when patients submit their form, or requiring all invoices to mention the College.

Multi-Cultural/Linguistic Resources

The group emphasized a few times the importance of making the resources available to immigrant groups, ethnic minorities and in various languages.