



# Citizens Advisory Group Summary Report

October 19, 2015

2015–712–624 Physiotherapists Report Summary

Facilitator: Nik Nanos, Nanos Research

## Background

Nanos Research was retained by the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario to collect feedback on a process that involves getting citizen input on the standards of the physiotherapy profession in Ontario. This feedback touched on a variety of topics with engaged citizens who are using, or have used, physiotherapeutic care in the past. Consultations were conducted in order to discern participants' thoughts about clinic regulation in general, and the College's clinic regulation concepts; as well as their thoughts about physiotherapists and advertising, including feelings on testimonials, endorsements, services and scope of practise, discounts, and claims of success. The consultations also collected participant feedback on videos the College has created to educate the public about topics related to physiotherapists, as well as to obtain input regarding what videos participants would like to see created. This summary is based on a session involving 10 individuals facilitated by Nanos on September 26th, 2015 at the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario office in Toronto. The College recruited the citizens and Nanos provided the discussion guide. Readers should note that facilitated sessions are not projective to patients or Ontario citizens but are meant to collect qualitative input on issues.

### Participants' Perception of Clinics

Generally, while most participants support the idea of regulation, a number of concerns were brought up over the course of the discussion. Quality of care was the most important issue regarding physiotherapist use according to participants, and they were concerned with how regulation could potentially affect quality of care when comparing OHIP-funded and private clinics—participants thought any regulation should strive to maintain consistency between these two types of clinics.

### Feedback on Clinic Regulation Concept

Though generally positive, throughout the discussion there was a view expressed that did not believe that regulation, as proposed by the College, could unequivocally work as intended without significant costs. Most participants thought that regulation was a step in the right direction however, and the minority that did not believe in regulatory measures conceded that they may be reacting to the word "regulation", with their first thoughts being of things like "bureaucratic" or "expensive".

### Feedback on Consultation and Engagement Strategy

Participants looked at a section of the College's in-progress website, as well as a video produced by the College explaining why and how regulation might take form. Overall, participants felt that the choices of colour, font, and the editing in the video were flashy and in some cases difficult to see. A common theme was that the information was useful, but the delivery made it difficult to absorb the information. However, participants thought the information on the website was adequate to educate them about the regulation plan, but said someone less-educated on physiotherapy would appreciate more clarity as in some cases the language was technical.

## General Discussion of Advertising Standards

Participants reacted negatively, for the most part, when discussing physiotherapists advertising their services. Beyond simply providing information (for example, hours, time, location, and qualifications) there was a fear that advertising and marketing by physiotherapists could lead to taking advantage of vulnerable populations.

## Participants' thoughts on Testimonials

A testimonial was defined to participants as a review by an individual patient of a physiotherapist that would be shared publicly. Participants' impressions were mostly negative, and many said they were uncomfortable with testimonials. Concerns about the usefulness and objectivity of testimonials, as well as the fact that anyone can write them either anonymously or semi-anonymously were raised. Overall, the theme of the discussion was that testimonials were unreliable indicators and unsuited to provide adequate insight into the operation and quality of a clinic. Participants were shown two webpages with testimonials; one was a Yelp.com review page with Yelp user testimonials, and the other was testimonials directly on the website of a physiotherapist. Participants reacted negatively to the testimonials in either case. For the Yelp.com page, participants plainly didn't trust the reviews at all, though they appreciated the information regarding location, hours, and contact information that was on the page. Regarding the testimonials directly on a physiotherapist's webpage, participants generally did not like that the website had a specific testimonials page – to them it appeared curated and they questioned if the physiotherapist would even allow negative testimonials at all.

## Participants' thoughts on Endorsements

An endorsement was defined to participants as something in an advertisement like a Patient Choice Award that was received, or an endorsement from a high profile athlete or individual, which would be shared publicly. Participants' impressions were still mostly negative, as they were afraid that seeking endorsements might end up cheapening the whole physiotherapist profession, as well as concerns about endorsements going to those having the deepest pockets. That being said, while they felt negative towards individual physiotherapists using endorsements some participants felt that an endorsement from someone with a good reputation would be acceptable.

## Discussion about Services and Scope of Practice

Participants felt that physiotherapists advertising additional services is acceptable as long as the practitioner had the applicable qualifications to do so. However, it was brought up that some services (for example, gait assessment) should be conducted by other professionals or specialists. When shown a list of potential other services, participants thought that many of the categories, like "Knee Pain" and "Auto-immune", were too broad to be useful descriptors.

## Participants' thoughts on Discounts

Participants felt both wary of and uncomfortable with discounts being offered by physiotherapists. One theme that emerged was that other medical professionals, like General Practitioners, do not offer discounts and to do so was seen as "tacky" by participants. Concerns

were also raised about services potentially being compromised by physiotherapists to recoup some of the cost of the discount. A [groupon.com](#) advertisement was shown to participants, who reacted negatively. Participants said that advertisements should have clear, non-technical, non-jargon language to help people make informed decisions, which this advertisement lacked. There were opinions expressed, however, which weren't as negative about discounts as the rest. Their main justification was that discounts were just a way for physiotherapists to help bring in new clients and drum up business.

### **Participants' thoughts on Claims of Success**

The wording of these claims were what pre-occupied participants during this discussion, for example, participants would want to know exactly how "successfully treated" is defined should it be used in an advertisement. While some participants outright rejected the use of these claims in advertisement citing their potential effect on vulnerable populations, a number offered suggestions on wordings that would make them more comfortable with their use. More suitable alternatives that were brought up included "We will work to meet your health goals", and "We strive for your satisfaction."

### **Impressions of College-produced Videos**

Two videos produced by the College were shown to participants, one concerning a general overview of physiotherapy and how to locate registered practitioners and the other overviewing the process that needs to be followed to make a complaint about a registered physiotherapist (Making a Complaint). Feedback from the first video (About Registered Physiotherapists) was generally negative. While it was clear and concise according to participants, a common theme was that there was a lot of jumping around and transitions which, according to participants, hampered their ability to absorb the information being presented. When it came to the second video, feedback was also negative. Participants said the way it was presented made them feel uneasy, and common criticisms were that the video was too long, and that the spokesperson narrating did not seem passionate. Some ideas for new videos that participants would like to see include a physiotherapist talking about why their job is satisfying to them, and a general informational video about physiotherapists that explains who they are and what they do. In addition, the idea of something short and concise in a realistic 'sketch' style scenario, or of having users of physiotherapists (people who are ill or patients were mentioned by participants) be a part of the video too was also popular.