



Canadian
Physiotherapy
Association

Association
canadienne de
physiothérapie

Position Statement Physiotherapists and Orthoses

Physiotherapists are qualified to assess dysfunction, injury or pain related to foot biomechanics. The assessment, prescription (depending on provincial jurisdiction) and dispensing of foot orthoses are included under the scope of practice for physiotherapists in Canada for the treatment of clients' foot dysfunction, injury or pain.

BACKGROUND

The use of foot orthoses in the treatment of mobility and pain disorders has increased over the past several years. Recently, extended health benefit insurers have sought ways to minimize cost increases in this area. One approach has been to limit those providers (regulated and unregulated) who can bill insurance plans for the assessment, prescription and dispensing of foot orthoses. Physiotherapists in some provinces are no longer permitted by some extended health benefit insurers to bill for these services.

In most provinces, the assessment, prescription and dispensing of foot orthoses are not controlled and do not constitute protected acts within provincial health professional regulation. These activities are therefore in the public domain and not subject to restrictions related to scope of practice.

CPA believes that limits on the number of qualified regulated health professionals who provide the assessment, prescription and dispensing of foot orthoses to clients claiming extended health benefits will not address cost concerns and will reduce client access to needed services by limiting the choice of available health professionals. This could in turn affect comprehensive client management with resultant increased costs to the insurer.

Physiotherapists are university educated, self-regulated health professionals qualified to assess dysfunction, injury or pain related to foot biomechanics. It falls within their scope of practice to assess for, prescribe (depending on provincial jurisdiction) and dispense foot orthoses in the treatment of foot dysfunction, injury or pain. As self-regulated primary care health professionals physiotherapists are ethically bound to ensure their ongoing competence in the skills that they practice by fulfilling continuing education requirements as appropriate.

In *Description of Physiotherapy in Canada: 2000 and Beyond*,¹ assessment, diagnosis and interventions are listed as some of many primary functions of physiotherapists. In this core document, CPA includes the 'prescription, fabrication and application of assistive, adaptive, supportive and protective devices and equipment' as one of the broad categories of interventions performed by physiotherapists. Foot orthoses, which fall into this grouping, are only one component of the physiotherapist's approach to the assessment, treatment and prevention of problems related to foot biomechanics.

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¹ Canadian Physiotherapy Association. *Description of Physiotherapy in Canada: 2000 and Beyond*. Toronto (Canada): Canadian Physiotherapy Association; 2000.