

Eleven million Canadians over the age of 12 years old are affected by musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions annually.¹ Strong evidence exists to support physiotherapy in their treatment. Physiotherapy contributes to improved physical function, allowing individuals to return to healthy living, including return to work and recreational activities.

Role of Physiotherapy for MSK Conditions

MSK conditions encompass a broad range of disorders that affect the bones, joints and connective tissue, and includes arthritis (and related conditions) and trauma. Physiotherapists assess and treat patients with MSK conditions in order to reduce and eliminate pain and address muscle weakness, loss of stability and limited functional abilities.

One in ten Canadians with an MSK condition consults with a physiotherapist.¹ Patients with MSK conditions account for the majority of outpatient physiotherapy consultations, with care delivered in private clinics, through on-site physiotherapy programs in the workplace and in the home.²

Physiotherapy is an effective tool in injury prevention and recovery in programs that focus on self-management and independence.

Impact on Patient Experience

Physiotherapy treatment improves a patient's physical wellbeing and quality of life.

- Physiotherapy interventions include education about treatment and self-management strategies which improves patient satisfaction.³
- Patients benefit from physiotherapists' use of multiple skills or approaches in the treatment of MSK conditions.⁴
- Patients are confident in physiotherapist abilities to assess MSK conditions.⁵

Impact on Population Health

Physiotherapy for MSK conditions reduces disability and increases physical function.⁴

- Physiotherapy promotes recovery from injury, reduces the risk of re-injury and enables early detection of acute events.⁴
- Physiotherapy care is a key part of the continuum of care focused on return to healthy living.¹¹
- Inclusion of physiotherapy in a multidisciplinary treatment program improves physical function, reduces disability and contributes to earlier return-to-work even in patients with poor prognosis.^{6,7}



Impact on Health Care Costs

Direct access to physiotherapy for patients with MSK injuries is safe, effective and a cost-effective service delivery model.⁸

- There is evidence that physiotherapists' advanced clinical knowledge in the treatment of individuals with MSK conditions results in lower health care costs.⁸
- Physiotherapy can delay or decrease the need for surgical intervention through appropriate conservative management, resulting in cost savings to the health care system.⁹
- On-site physiotherapy services provide early cost-effective management of MSK injuries, reduces the number of workplace claims and the duration and costs of lost work time.¹⁰

Summary

Physiotherapy plays an integral role in the care and treatment of patients with MSK conditions. Treatment for patients with MSK conditions promotes injury recovery and functional improvements, with a focus on self-management and independence. Physiotherapy for MSK conditions is particularly effective for injury prevention and detection prior to the condition becoming incapacitating for the patient.

Outpatient physiotherapy programs for patients with MSK conditions are cost-effective and result in earlier return-to-work and return to pre-injury activities.

Key References:

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The value of a health care service is more than its proven cost-effectiveness. Quality of life, access, and continuity of care and integration of services are equally important criteria when looking at the broader concept of value.