

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS ROLE IN RETURN TO WORK

TAC AND WORKSAFE 2016 PHYSIOTHERAPY SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

Physiotherapists play a pivotal role in supporting patients to return to work (RTW) following a workplace injury, illness or traffic accident.

Return to Work (RTW) can help contribute to the recovery process by increasing social inclusion and improving overall well-being. **In February 2016, 200 Victorian physiotherapists were surveyed to understand their experiences, perceptions and the support needed when working with patients to assist their recovery and RTW.** This document summarises the key findings.

AWARENESS OF THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF WORK



The Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine released the Consensus Statement on the Health Benefits of Work in 2011.

AROUND A THIRD (35%) OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS SURVEYED WERE AWARE OF THIS CONSENSUS STATEMENT.

Encouraging patients to return to work



of physiotherapists surveyed **reported that they discussed RTW during their patient's first visit.**

COMPLETION OF PHYSIOTHERAPY TRAINING PROGRAMS



EARLY INTERVENTION PHYSIOTHERAPY FRAMEWORK (EIPF)



OCCUPATIONAL PHYSIOTHERAPY PROGRAM



BOTH EIPF AND OCCUPATIONAL PHYSIOTHERAPY PROGRAM

ALMOST ALL (97%) OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS REPORTED ...

...that they had participated in either WorkSafe's Early Intervention Physiotherapy Framework (EIPF) and/or the Occupational Physiotherapy Program. **Of these physiotherapists around 6 in 10 (63%) subsequently said they had changed their approach to helping Worksafe and TAC patients.**

As a result of completing the EIPF and/or Occupational Physiotherapy Program, physiotherapists reported the following changes in their approach to treating TAC and WorkSafe patients...



TELL PATIENTS THAT RETURN TO WORK IS IMPORTANT FOR RECOVERY



BEGIN THE RTW CONVERSATION SOONER



MORE LIKELY TO ENCOURAGE MY PATIENT TO RTW

TREATING TAC AND WORKSAFE PATIENTS

REVISED CERTIFICATE OF CAPACITY

In July 2014, **WorkSafe** and the TAC revised the **Certificate of Capacity**. This was to place



greater focus on the capacity of the injured worker, and to assist communication between the certifier, employer and insurance agent.

Physiotherapists use of the Certificate of Capacity

The main factors which prevent physiotherapists from writing the certificates of capacity are:



GP COMPLETES THE CERTIFICATE OF CAPACITY



UNSURE OF THE CERTIFICATE OF CAPACITY PROCESS

Increasing the use of the Certificate of Capacity

Physiotherapists reported that **better remuneration and reduced administration would support them** to adopt a more active role in writing certificates of capacity.

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS & SUPPORTS

Physiotherapists identified e-learning modules (60%) and telephone support lines (57%) as key support structures for helping them manage their compensable patients in line with best practice.



E-LEARNING MODULES



TELEPHONE SUPPORT LINES

Key Survey Findings

- Physiotherapists generally hold a clear and sound understanding of what their specific role is when helping a patient RTW.
- There are relatively low levels of awareness among Physiotherapists of the Consensus Statement on the Health Benefits of Work.
- High participation in the EIPF program suggests that these programs could provide a setting to discuss the Consensus Statement as well as emphasise the importance of the statement and its findings.
- While most physiotherapists were aware of the revised certificate of capacity and had used, or were using it, there is opportunity to offer more support around, and incentive for, completing the certificate. Opportunities also exist to better, articulate and advocate for the important role physiotherapists play in assisting an injured person to RTW within the context of GPs, employers, an other treating health practitioners.



LINKS

Certificate of Capacity
EIPF Program
RTW Webinars

<http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/health-professionals/treating-injured-workers/certificates-of-capacity>

<http://www.tac.vic.gov.au/providers/for-health-professionals/physical-therapies/physiotherapist>

<http://www.pief.com.au/index.php/health-professionals/allied-health-vic>