Dear,

RE: WA State election commitments to physiotherapy

Ahead of the state government election in Western Australia, members of the Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) are seeking your commitment to provide world-class physiotherapy services that every West Australian can access. The APA represents 23 000 physiotherapists around Australia, with over 3000 members in Western Australia alone.

The funding and availability of health services continues to be a priority for the community in this state. As healthcare costs continue to grow, governments need to find solutions.

There is strong evidence that supports physiotherapy treatment to prevent surgery in future. Spending on physiotherapy services is therefore an efficient and effective use of public funds. Research has shown that:

- Physiotherapy can successfully treat female stress urinary incontinence in 82 per cent of women. Just one episode of physiotherapy care was required, at an average cost of $302.40. This compares with $4668–$6124 for surgical management of the condition.
- Physiotherapy treatment reduces pain and improves function in those with knee osteoarthritis, which may delay or prevent the need for a total knee replacement.

We are committed to keeping people out of hospitals. However, in those instances where hospitalisation occurs, physiotherapists have a strong role to play as primary contact practitioners in emergency departments. One study shows that physiotherapists can improve patient flow by reducing waiting and treatment times for musculoskeletal conditions. Another study concludes that a physiotherapy service in the emergency department may result in a reduced length of stay and fewer requests for imaging.

Physiotherapy's value lies in its conservative approach to treatment, where surgery is seen as a last resort and people are empowered to take control of their health.

We are calling on the major parties to invest in Western Australian health for the long-term by committing to:

- Primary contact physiotherapists in all emergency departments in WA
- Increased numbers of physiotherapists at rural and regional hospitals
- Funding for rural and regional physiotherapists to access high-level education from tertiary hospitals
- Expansion of chronic pain services to ensure adequate service provision to both adults and children living with chronic pain
- Greater certainty for physiotherapy services in the public sector through the use of more permanent positions
Physiotherapists provide the opportunity for people to make the most of their lives and contribute to their community. We look forward to hearing how your party will commit to funding this important service.

Please address all correspondence to Rahul Madan, WA Branch President of the Australian Physiotherapy Association, available at the postal address below.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

Rahul Madan
WA Branch President
Australian Physiotherapy Association

References

Female stress urinary incontinence

Knee osteoarthritis

Primary contact physiotherapy in emergency departments
Sutton et al, Primary-contact physiotherapists manage a minor trauma caseload in the emergency department without misdiagnoses or adverse events: an observational study. Journal of Physiotherapy 2015;2:77-80.