

29 April 2025

The Bills Committee

Hong Kong Health Bureau

Legislative Council of Hong Kong

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Re: support for direct access to physiotherapists services in Hong Kong

On behalf of World Physiotherapy*, we write in support of our member organisation in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association, to advocate for patients in Hong Kong being able to directly access physiotherapist services.

We advocate that the proposed circumstances in the Supplementary Medical Professions Bill 2025, where direct access to physiotherapist services are permitted, be expanded to fully encompass the definition of direct access by explicitly stating that physiotherapy services are available to patients/clients without the requirement of a referral.

World Physiotherapy's policy statement on direct access states that "Physiotherapy professional entry-level education prepares physiotherapists to be primary contact autonomous practitioners, able to examine/assess, diagnose, intervene/treat, determine outcomes and discharge patients without referral from another health professional or other third party."¹

The direct access model of service delivery has a history of success globally, supported by a growing body of published research evidence highlighting its benefits. This evidence shows support for patient safety, clinical and cost effectiveness, and enhanced patient and practitioner satisfaction. Investment in a direct access model provides shorter wait times, reduced healthcare costs, and improved outcomes. This brings benefits to public health systems, especially primary health care. Early access to physiotherapy services, through direct access, can reduce the likelihood of acute conditions becoming chronic and leading to disability. Most of this evidence comes from countries like the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK but is emerging from other settings also. World Physiotherapy's annual membership census shows that 72% of its member organisations have some form of direct access in their country/territory.

¹World Physiotherapy policy statement (2023) Direct access and patient/client self-referral to physiotherapy <https://world.physio/policy/ps-direct-access>

²World Physiotherapy (2021) <https://world.physio/sites/default/files/2021-07/Physiotherapist-education-framework-FINAL.pdf>

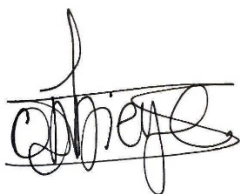
Further, physiotherapists in Hong Kong are committed to lifelong learning and continuous professional development, enabling them to stay up to date on advancements and innovations in the physiotherapy profession and provide evidence-based care to patients/clients.²

Requiring patients to obtain a referral from other health professionals, prior to physiotherapist services for health conditions and patient populations within the scope of physiotherapist practice, creates unwarranted wait times for patients to access the care they need. This further risks non-complex conditions becoming chronic and complex, thus requiring increase utilisation of health care services and burdening the health system in Hong Kong.

We applaud the Hong Kong Health Bureau for its efforts to enhance the role of allied health professionals in primary healthcare and strongly urge it to use the definition of direct access to its full meaning and allow the population of Hong Kong to receive physiotherapist services when they need them.

We remain available for any clarifications you may require with regards to this issue.

Sincerely,



Sidy Dieye
World Physiotherapy CEO



Alexander Woo
Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association President



Marco Pang
World Physiotherapy Asia Western Pacific region chair

** World Physiotherapy is the sole international organisation for physiotherapy, representing more than 600,000 physiotherapists worldwide through its 129 member organisations. It is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation in official relations with the World Health Organization.*