



## **ADVICE TO CONSIDER - PHYSICAL THERAPIST SAFETY IN CLINICAL PRACTICE**

From time to time we hear about situations where a registrant feels uncomfortable or unsafe due to client interactions with the physical therapist, office staff or other clients in the clinical space. While many of these situations are manageable with good communication and by maintaining appropriate boundaries, there may be instances where the therapeutic relationship cannot be maintained (eg: abusive or threatening behavior, or when the actions and behaviours of the client pose safety concerns towards the physical therapist or others within the practice setting).

### **Staying safe**

WorkSafeBC sets out regulation for the workplace. According to [WorkSafeBC](#), “As a worker, you have rights to a safe and healthy workplace, which includes the right to refuse unsafe work”. The College also requires you to practice self-care and attend to your own health and well-being, as maintaining good physical and mental health is a cornerstone of providing safe client care. As per the [CHCPBC Code of Ethical Conduct](#), all registrants have a duty to “take responsibility for their own physical and mental health and refrain from practising physical therapy while their ability to provide appropriate and competent care is compromised”.

### **Discharging a client who poses safety concerns**

The Duty of Care Standard of Practice states that in situations where you feel unsafe providing care, you may discharge the client without providing for continuity of care if the client:

- poses a safety risk to you or others within the practice setting
- is abusive (physically, verbally, emotionally or sexually) towards you or others within the practice setting.

If you choose to discharge the client, be sure to document the reasons for discharge in the client’s clinical record. You should also communicate these reasons to the client unless you feel it is unsafe to do so.

### **More resources**

WorkSafeBC may be able to provide additional resources regarding workplace safety, and in extreme cases it may be necessary to call the police non-emergency (or emergency) number to report concerns.