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Message from the Presiding Member

Welcome to the first issue of the *Registrant update* from the Physiotherapy Board of Australia (the Board) for 2016.

In this issue, we highlight some upcoming revisions to some registration standards and guidelines, remind you of the already revised registration standards and when they come into force, and provide an update on the work around physiotherapist prescribing.

First of all, though, I would like to introduce myself as Presiding Member of the Board. The previous Chair, Paul Shinkfield, who was a Tasmanian practitioner member of the Board, resigned from his position on the Board after taking on the position of National Director of AHPRA's Risk-based Regulation Unit.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Paul for his tireless efforts in guiding the Board for the last three years, his exceptional leadership and his ability to engage with physiotherapists and other Board stakeholders. Paul will continue to contribute to the workings of the Board through his work with AHPRA, particularly in the area of data analysis.

I am a practitioner member from Ballarat, Victoria and have been involved in the regulation of physiotherapists under the previous law in Victoria since 1994. I have been a member of the Board since its inception in 2009, before the start of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme) under which we are all regulated since 1 July 2010.

I hope to continue Paul's work in engaging with stakeholders and in providing up-to-date regulatory information that affects you as physiotherapists.

Charles Flynn

Presiding Member, Physiotherapy Board of Australia



Call for applications for appointment to the Physiotherapy Board of Australia – practitioner member from Tasmania

The Board is seeking applications from Tasmanian practitioners interested in appointment to the National Board.

You may express interest in being considered for appointment as Board Chair when you apply for the practitioner member vacancy.

More information about the roles, eligibility requirements and the application process can be found in the information guide and application form available from AHPRA's [Board member recruitment page](#).

For enquiries, please contact statutoryappointments@ahpra.gov.au.

Applications close **Monday 18 April 2016**.

Prescribing

As outlined in our November 2015 newsletter, the Board continues to explore the potential case for developing a submission to health ministers on physiotherapist prescribing. Any submission would seek approval to grant endorsements on the registration of eligible physiotherapists to prescribe scheduled medicines.

The message published in the November newsletter is repeated here. Doing so intends to highlight the large amount of work required to develop a case for prescribing and to emphasise that it is not simply a matter of the Board exercising the part of the legislation that allows National Boards to endorse registration for prescribing. Ministers must first approve such an application and that case for change must show a clear net benefit to the health of the Australian people, that it is cost effective and ensures the safety of patients.

Currently, the Board does not have approval from Australian health ministers to endorse the registration of physiotherapists for scheduled medicines. There are many steps that the Board must take over a potentially significant period of time to obtain the required approval from health ministers. These include a formal submission to ministers after wide-ranging public consultation on the scope of the proposal and the additional regulatory standards and processes that would need to apply.

At the moment, the Board is working with other National Scheme professions and government to develop a framework to guide regulated health professions in making a case and presenting it to health ministers for consideration.

Should prescribing by physiotherapists become a reality in the future, there will be no requirement for all physiotherapists to prescribe. However, if you choose to prescribe you would need to meet initial and ongoing education requirements and meet other standards, codes and guidelines to ensure you remain competent and safe. If you choose not to prescribe there would be no impact on your registration as a physiotherapist.

We will continue to update you as this issue progresses.

Data analysis

One of the great benefits of the National Scheme is that AHPRA can collect data across all professions and across all states and territories for the first time. It is also a world first and this information is a very valuable tool that will assist all National Boards in providing targeted and appropriate guidance in the future.

At this stage, it is premature to make definitive statements about patterns of notifications (complaints). However, after analysing the available data, it appears that there are some themes emerging across professions (that is, not just physiotherapy) that suggest that older, male practitioners who are working in isolation may have a higher risk of having complaints made against them.

For physiotherapy, the early data analysis indicates that notifications (complaints) about poor clinical care tend to centre around the following themes:

- excessive force/manipulation resulting in post-therapy pain
- perceived rough and painful treatment
- failure to take a good history
- failure to explain exercises adequately, and
- therapies provided not relieving symptoms.

The Board may provide further guidance to practitioners on these issues as more data are collected and the statistical reliability of results increases.

Refreshed Registrations and Notifications Committee

As reported to you in November, the Board's Registrations and Notifications Committee (RNC) is the delegated authority to consider matters relating to individual physiotherapists –

whether it is a complex registration matter or consideration of a notification (complaint) about a physiotherapist. It is a seven-member committee made up of both practitioner and community members.

Expressions of interest from several interested physiotherapists and community members were received and the Board has appointed the following people for a two-year period:

- Fiona McKinnon – Chair
- Jennifer Azurin
- Alison Bell
- Maureen Capp
- David Cross
- Peter Kerr
- Libby Soderholm

Whenever expressions of interest are called for by the Board, the information is available on the [Committee member recruitment page](#) on AHPRA's website.

Revised registration standards

A revised [Professional indemnity insurance \(PII\) registration standard](#) is now published and comes into force from 1 July 2016. The revisions to the PII standards for physiotherapists have not resulted in any changed requirements. For PII, you continue to be required to self-assess how much PII you need for your chosen scope of practice, and to have appropriate run-off cover. The document has been revised only in terms of its format and language.

A revised [Continuing professional development \(CPD\) registration standard](#) is also now published and in force. The requirements for physiotherapists have not changed. That is, you continue to be required to complete at least 20 hours of CPD of your choice – but it must relate to your chosen scope of practice and you must reflect upon it. You will be required to provide evidence of having met the standard should you be audited, and you have to make a declaration upon renewal each year that you have met this standard.

From 1 December 2016 a revised *Recency of practice registration standard* comes into force. It is currently published on the Board's [Registration standards web page](#) to prepare everyone for the start of the new standard.

From 1 December 2016, you will need to meet the following requirements in order to maintain your registration as a physiotherapist:

- You must make a declaration upon renewal in 2017 that you have practised for at least 450 hours in the previous three years, or 150 hours in the previous 12 months.
- You must provide evidence of meeting this standard if asked through audit or through an investigation of a complaint made about you.

If you do not meet the standard it does not necessarily mean that you cannot be registered. The factors that the Board considers in such cases are outlined in the [CPD guidelines](#) published on our website.

National Scheme news

New video outlines objectives and role of the National Scheme

A new video and an accompanying infographic explaining the Australia-wide scheme that is in place to protect members of the public has recently been launched by AHPRA.

Aimed mainly at the community, the video outlines how AHPRA, working in partnership with the 14 National Boards, helps regulate Australia's 630,000-plus registered health practitioners through a national scheme.

[The video](#) explains how the National Scheme works and how patients are protected.

Both resources are available on the [What we do](#) page of the AHPRA website. The video can also be watched on AHPRA's [YouTube channel](#).

Employer obligations: new awareness campaign

AHPRA has published a [news item](#) that outlines employers' obligations, and has ads running on LinkedIn and Facebook. This is the first step in the campaign, with many more activities to follow, including direct mail, paid print advertising, and in-language advertising (for the public campaign).

The campaign will be rolled out in stages and has three target audiences and objectives:

1. Employers – check the [register](#) before employing someone, keep up to date with changes to registrations, make mandatory reports when required.
2. Practitioners – know your obligations as a registered health practitioner.
3. Public – check to see if your practitioner is registered.

National drug screening protocol in place from November 2015

There are health practitioners with a history of substance misuse who have restrictions placed on their registration. These restrictions are generally designed to keep the public safe while the practitioner remains in practice.

When restrictions are placed on a health practitioner's registration, AHPRA monitors the practitioner to make sure they are complying with the restrictions. This process is referred to as 'monitoring and compliance'.

From November 2015, all health practitioners who have restrictions placed on their registration by the Board as a result of past substance misuse will have routine quarterly hair testing, in addition to random urine testing. Routine hair testing provides additional information about the use of a wide range of drugs,

over a longer time period. It therefore provides greater assurance to the Board that the practitioner is not impaired as a result of ongoing substance misuse.

More information is available in the AHPRA [news item](#).

State and territory summaries now available – annual report 2014/15

State and territory summaries of the annual report are now available on the [AHPRA website](#). The summaries provide a view of national data about our work to keep the public safe through a state or territory lens. We provide national comparisons to show how the state or territory compares with the national average and where possible, we provide two years of data, to identify and track trends over time.

More comprehensive data are in the [2014/15 annual report](#) of AHPRA and the National Boards which was published in November 2015. The annual report also includes more detailed profession-specific information.

In the next month, the 14 National Boards will publish individual profession profiles on the AHPRA website, with links on their own websites. Keep an eye out for the physiotherapy profession profile.

For more information

- Visit the [Board's website](#) for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines and FAQ.
- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#).
- For registration enquiries, call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 9275 9009 (for overseas callers).
- Address mail correspondence to: Charles Flynn, Presiding Member, Physiotherapy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, VIC 3001.