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## Changes to physiotherapy contracts

**As you may have heard through the news media, the Endorsed Provider Network (EPN, which provides physiotherapy free of charge to ACC clients) will soon be replaced with an interim contract between ACC and physiotherapists.**

The interim contract, which takes effect for one year from 16 November 2009, makes significant changes to the funding of physiotherapy services – a move that's designed to stem unsustainable growth in expenditure, while ensuring that ACC clients receive quality treatment.

Physiotherapy costs rose 214% between 2000 and 2008; the cost in 1999/2000 was \$39.7 million. In 2008/09 alone, physiotherapy cost levy payers \$144 million and, without change, this is forecast to increase to \$232 million by 2013/14.

Rises in costs of this nature are unsustainable for levy payers and the ACC scheme, and they do not belong in a value-for-money environment.

There was also a 60.2% increase in treatment volumes between 2000 and 2008. With the introduction of free physiotherapy through the EPN in 2004, the volume of claims rose by 45.5%.

The introduction of free physiotherapy has also seen a disproportionate use of physiotherapy in higher socio-economic groups. ACC will monitor client access to

see if there is an adverse impact on any specific groups, and will consider how to address these issues if they arise.

Under the interim contract, physiotherapists will be paid \$44.70 (including GST) for an initial consultation and \$31.93 for each follow-up consultation. ACC will no longer pay different rates according to injury complexity.

Physiotherapists will also be able to charge clients a co-payment (with discretion on the amount), as was the practice before the EPN was established.

The interim contract will remain in place for a year, while we continue to work with the physiotherapy sector on developing a model for the future. This will include:

- simplifying accreditation processes
- enhancing the quality framework for physiotherapy services
- exploring new approaches to purchasing services, with a focus on providing the treatment ACC clients need for effective rehabilitation, at the right time and at a price New Zealand can afford.

## Services to address pain issues

ACC is undertaking a review of its services to address issues of pain where they are a barrier to rehabilitation, as the contracts are due to expire in March 2010.

Discussions have started with a number of interested groups, with the aim of completing the final report in mid-November. If you have any comments or

suggestions about pain services you may contribute to the review either through your professional representative organisation or by obtaining a feedback form from Lauralei Dorian at [lauralei.dorian@acc.co.nz](mailto:lauralei.dorian@acc.co.nz). We'll keep professional organisations and contracted providers updated on progress.

## Sensitive Claims Unit – a new way of working

ACC provides help to those who have a significant mental injury resulting from sexual abuse or sexual assault. In other words, the sexual abuse/assault in itself is not the grounds for receiving assistance from ACC.

We will shortly be changing the way we handle claims made as a result of sexual abuse or sexual assault so that people who have an accepted claim can receive effective therapy as soon as possible.

We plan to implement processes that support the best practice guidelines for assessing and treating claims resulting from sexual abuse/assault. These guidelines have been developed by Massey University, and recognise the difficulties in diagnosing mental injury caused by sexual abuse.

The guidelines encourage client management processes that are based on effective information collection and decision-making, and are aimed at achieving demonstrable results, optimal timing and duration of treatment and ensuring consistency.

We will implement the guidelines based on a new Clinical Framework for our Sensitive Claims Unit, and will use them as the basis for assessing and treating Sensitive

Claims Unit clients. The Framework:

- reflects the most current approach to treating injured clients
- demonstrates the most recent evidence-based practice
- sets the scene for treatment providers to use objective outcome measurements in the future.

The next step is to develop 'Clinical Pathways' for Sensitive Claims Unit clients. We've already discussed draft Pathways with treatment providers at a series of workshops around the country. We're using feedback from providers for further revision of the Pathways; the revised Pathways will be released to providers during the week of 31 August for further comment. When complete the Pathways will be introduced and implemented as a new way of delivering services for clients with significant mental injury resulting from a Schedule 3 event on Monday 12 October.

Our expectation is that the Pathways will be continually reviewed to ensure we implement evidence-based best practice in line with ACC's commitment to continuous improvement. If you have any questions, please contact Dr Peter Jansen at [Peter.Jansen@acc.co.nz](mailto:Peter.Jansen@acc.co.nz).

## Focus on effective General Practice monitoring

At a General Practice Liaison Group meeting in May, ACC advised attendees that it will be seeking to improve quality and manage costs through monitoring GP practices more effectively.

Working with relevant professional groups, we'll be developing monitoring programmes to ensure that GP practices comply with the Cost of Treatment regulations or contract and meet ACC's expectations.

The data ACC monitors includes invoicing, medical certificate days, and visits per claim. The Group was informed that most GPs and practice nurses operate within the peer norm. However, monitoring results demonstrate that some providers may be outside the norm. We may be contacting these providers to provide feedback and learn more about the reasons behind this practice. Where appropriate, we'll work with them on any issues and provide education.

## Pharmaceutical update

A number of prescribers have told us they don't apply to PHARMAC or district health boards for special authority funding because they don't think ACC clients qualify for it.

We'd like to clarify that all ACC clients meet the criteria for special authority funding. This is specified by the Ministry of Health and outlined in the 'Guide for Eligibility for Publicly Funded Health and Disability Services', which is available at

[www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/eligibility-guide-accident](http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/eligibility-guide-accident).

We pay for these services through Crown funding agreements that cover our clients' use of hospital and community services, which includes access to pharmaceuticals. So when you are prescribing pharmaceuticals for an ACC client, always check first for special authority and discretionary community funding from Pharmac or the DHB.

## High-tech imaging consultation

Now that the consultation on changes to the high-tech imaging (HTI) service has finished, ACC is currently considering all submissions. Many thanks to those who participated in the consultation process. We will notify HTI service providers of the results and decisions by the end of September 2009. From there:

- we'll post a contract variation to providers in October, along with information on any training required

- the contract variation will come into effect on 1 December 2009.

Over the next few months we'll continue work on the broader design of the service, with a view to have the new contract in place by July 2010.

### ACC NEWS feedback:

We would appreciate your feedback about ACC News.

Please email us at [feedback@acc.co.nz](mailto:feedback@acc.co.nz).

## Dental update

### Completing dental invoices

When invoicing ACC for dental services on the ACC37, please remember to:

- include claim numbers, as our electronic processing system requires these numbers to ensure prompt, efficient payments
- include X-rays if your service has included an extraction, as we need these as formal records for future reference
- include your provider and vendor numbers where specified.

### Registering dental claims

When lodging a dental claim with ACC, please make sure that you complete all the details required on the ACC42 (injury claim) form. If we don't have the information we need, there may be delays for your patient while we investigate.

### Prior approval

While all dental services are approved under the regulations, some require you to get approval from ACC before you proceed.

These include dental crowns, for which you need our approval before you start any crown preparation. If you provide other treatment without our prior approval, the onus is on you to prove that the treatment meets legislative requirements and is required as a result of an accident.

We recommend that you seek our approval for any treatment that's unusual or likely to incur significant costs. If you're not sure whether you should, simply phone us on 0800 101 996 or send an email to [dndental@acc.co.nz](mailto:dndental@acc.co.nz) or [hndental@acc.co.nz](mailto:hndental@acc.co.nz).

### Invoicing for dental crowns

If your treatment includes a dental crown, please remember that you should only invoice us once the definitive crown has been cemented or bonded onto the tooth – not when you've created a temporary crown and sent the impression to the laboratory. We can only pay you for full and complete treatment.

## Upcoming conferences and events

9–12 September – **Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners Conference**, Duxton Hotel, Wellington [www.conference.co.nz/index.cfm/RNZCGP09](http://www.conference.co.nz/index.cfm/RNZCGP09)

17–19 September – **New Zealand Association of Counsellors**, Federated Farmers Building, Hamilton [www.nzac.org.nz](http://www.nzac.org.nz)

22–25 September – **Australian and New Zealand Burn Association 2009 Scientific Meeting**, Te Papa, Wellington [www.confer.co.nz/anzba09](http://www.confer.co.nz/anzba09)

24–25 September – **Carers New Zealand National Carers Conference**, Waipuna Events Centre, Auckland [www.carers.net.nz/index.php](http://www.carers.net.nz/index.php)

8–10 October – **New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists Clinical Workshops 2009**, Tauranga [www.nzaotevents.com](http://www.nzaotevents.com)

*Continued ...*

## Managing distal upper limb pain

ACC has recently distributed to GP practices nationwide clinical management guidelines for seven common upper limb musculoskeletal conditions:

- carpal tunnel syndrome
- epicondylitis
- de Quervain's disease
- primary Raynaud's phenomenon
- peritendinitis and tenosynovitis of the forearm and wrist
- olecranon bursitis
- non-specific diffuse forearm pain.

Developed in conjunction with clinical and industry groups, the guidelines bring together evidence-based material in a printed summary document as well as a concise version on CD-Rom. Please note that ACC only covers these conditions if they are work-related gradual process injuries.

Additional copies of the guidelines can be ordered at [www.acc.co.nz/publications/index.htm](http://www.acc.co.nz/publications/index.htm) or by calling the stationery order line on 0800 802 444. A pdf of the comprehensive version of the guidelines (approximately 300 pages) is also available on the website.

## Helping make New Zealand homes safe

Safety Week begins on 7 September. We're working with business and community organisations to reduce the personal and social cost of injuries in the home.

With one in seven Kiwis injured in their homes each year, ACC is determined to make people aware of the risks they face every day. And, more importantly, how they can be avoided.

It's not too late to get some of the great resources available for your waiting

rooms – posters for your walls, leaflets and tip cards to give to patients, and kids' activity packs to keep the young ones busy. Some of them are available in other languages too, including Māori, Tongan and Chinese.

We appreciate your support and are confident that together we can help make a difference. For resources and more information, visit [www.homesafety.co.nz](http://www.homesafety.co.nz) or email [safetynzweek@acc.co.nz](mailto:safetynzweek@acc.co.nz).

## Annual Practising Certificates – correction

You may remember that last month's edition of ACC News included an article titled 'A reminder about Annual Practising Certificates' in which we asked registered health professionals and treatment providers to send us copies of their renewed Certificates.

This was incorrect. If for any reason we can't verify your practising status with

your responsible authority, we'll write to you and ask you for confirmation. If you can't provide confirmation of your current Certificate, you may not receive payment for services you've provided.

We apologise for any confusion or inconvenience this may have caused.

## Assessors required at ACC

### Medical assessors for vocational rehabilitation

We welcome enquiries from suitably qualified medical practitioners throughout New Zealand who are interested in carrying out medical assessments on our behalf.

We seek medical assessors as part of our commitment to developing and improving services to Māori, Pacific and Asian clients as well as Sensitive Claims clients.

Medical assessors assess client needs as part of the vocational rehabilitation process. Their role is to measure progress and the outcomes of rehabilitation, and assess clients' capacity to work.

If you'd like to apply, you must be a registered medical practitioner. If you provide general medical services, you must also:

- have an interest, and proven work experience, in disability management in the workplace or in occupational rehabilitation
- have at least five years' experience in general practice
- meet one of the following criteria:
  - be a Fellow of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners or hold an equivalent qualification

- be undertaking training towards becoming a Fellow of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners or hold an equivalent qualification
- have undertaken relevant advanced training.

If you don't provide general medical services, you must:

- have an interest, and proven work experience, in disability management in the workplace or in occupational rehabilitation
- be a member of a recognised college.

To apply or for more information, please email [ritu.nair@acc.co.nz](mailto:ritu.nair@acc.co.nz).

### Sensitive claims assessors

We would also like to invite already-contracted initial medical assessors to extend their contracts to cover initial medical assessments for Sensitive Claims clients (people who have a mental injury following sexual abuse). In particular, and in response to significant demand from Sensitive Claims clients for female assessors, we welcome enquiries from female initial medical assessors.

For more information, please email [ritu.nair@acc.co.nz](mailto:ritu.nair@acc.co.nz).

## Upcoming conferences and events *continued ...*

15–18 October – **Practice Managers and Administrators Conference**, Rydges Hotel, Christchurch. [www.pmaanz.org.nz/General/conference.html](http://www.pmaanz.org.nz/General/conference.html)

16–18 October – **New Zealand Association of Hand Therapists Annual Conference**, Tauranga. [www.nzah.org.nz](http://www.nzah.org.nz)