

Reserved Activities in Physiotherapy

MAKING DECISIONS AS TO THE USE OF RESTRAINT MEASURES¹

This reserved activity allows physiotherapists to actively participate in decisions about whether to use a restraint measure when a patient is behaving in a way that represents a real danger to themselves and that is likely to be repeated. The decision about whether to use a restraint measure is based on an overall assessment of the patient and their environment by the interdisciplinary team. The role of the physiotherapist is to assess the underlying physical causes of situations that represent a danger to the patient and to establish a connection between them and the physical and human environment.

The decision to remove a restraint measure involves the same decision-making process, namely a full assessment of the patient by the interdisciplinary team.

Restraint is considered to be a control measure, like isolation and chemicals. The activity reserved to physiotherapists concerns only the decision about whether to use the restraint measure.

Restraint is defined as a control measure that consists of preventing or limiting a person's freedom of movement using

bodily force, mechanical means, or the removal of equipment the patient uses to compensate for a handicap.² Certain types of clothing (vests, jackets), abdominal or pelvic belts, geriatric chairs, trays attached to chairs, and bed rails are some examples of restraint measures that can be used in care settings to limit the patient's movement. It is important to specify that the free and informed consent from the patient or their legal representative is required before a restraint can be used.

The decision about whether to use restraints should be made on an exceptional basis and as a last resort after all other methods³ have been shown to be ineffective. Physiotherapy professionals can propose various alternatives to restraint, such as participating in walking or exercise programs, having a motion detector, using walking aids, and wearing a hip protector.

Physiotherapy professionals must comply with the control measure application protocols established by the institutions in which they work.

AUTHORIZED MEMBERS

Physiotherapists

CERTIFICATION

No OPPQ training certificate is required to perform this reserved activity.

SHARED

Other health and social services professionals, such as physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, social workers, psychologists, and psychoeducators, are authorized to perform this activity, subject to the aims described in their respective scopes of practice.

Although the decision about whether to use a restraint measure is reserved to the abovementioned professionals, other professionals, such as physical rehabilitation therapists, may participate in the discussions on whether to use a restraint by sharing their observations and the information they have gathered.

PLEASE NOTE!

A distinction should be made between deciding to use a restraint and applying it. When authorized professionals consider that a restraint measure is necessary, it may be applied in compliance with the patient's intervention plan by anyone competent to do so, including a physical rehabilitation therapist.

It should also be noted that the decision to use restraint in an emergency situation, where the patient shows unusual behaviour that is an imminent danger to their safety, is not reserved and can be made by anyone competent to do so, such as the physical rehabilitation therapist. However, this situation is temporary and must be assessed by the interdisciplinary team within a short period of time.

Physiotherapists and physical rehabilitation therapists are often called upon to implement restraint alternatives. Decisions about these alternative measures are not covered by this reserved activity.

¹ Section 37.1, Subsection 3 g) of the *Professional Code*.

² Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (2002). *Orientations ministérielles relatives à l'utilisation exceptionnelle des mesures de contrôle : contention, isolement et substances chimiques*, Québec City: MSSS, page 14.

³ Restraint alternatives consist of strategies aimed at avoiding or limiting the use of restraint measures.