

**APA CHARTER OF EDUCATIONAL
STANDARDS**

SECTION 2

APA MUSCULOSKELETAL PHYSIOTHERAPY COMPETENCY STANDARDS

Background

Most of the background to the development of the APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards has been outlined in the Preface to Section 1 of this document. However, other aspects of the background require further clarification from the viewpoint of the Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Australia (MPA).

The MPA is a National Special Group of the APA. The MPA represents graduates of courses in Musculoskeletal physiotherapy completed at a postgraduate level in Australia and New Zealand that are recognised by MPA. From its inception in 1965, MPA has based its admission to membership on the fulfillment of academic prerequisites rather than simply on an individual's interest in musculoskeletal physiotherapy. MPA regards the maintenance of academic and clinical standards as vital and upholds these standards through the activity of the Academic Standards Committee of MPA.

MPA is a founding member of the International Federation of Orthopaedic Manipulative Physiotherapists (IFOMT). Australia has full membership of IFOMT largely as a result of the high standards set for admission to MPA membership.

The academic requirements for ordinary membership of MPA have been altered over the years to reflect changes in the courses offered by tertiary institutions. At the present time, admission to membership is dependent on a graduate completing a course in Australia or New Zealand that complies with MPA requirements. MPA requires a musculoskeletal physiotherapy course to provide no less than 215 hours of supervised clinical practice (Bylaw 6c). Supervised clinical practice has been clearly defined as being ideally a staff tutor ratio of 1:3 or 1:4 and not more than 1:5. Clinical supervision with a ratio of one student to one musculoskeletal physiotherapy supervisor is also acceptable, provided the clinical supervisor is not concurrently treating a list of patients and is genuinely available for supervision.

Ordinary membership of MPA allows a physiotherapist to use the title "Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist". This title is deemed to represent a particular standard of clinical expertise or competence that is promoted by MPA within the profession and to the marketplace.

Since 1993, MPA, through the Academic Standards Committee, has been investigating the development of a formal review process to ensure that musculoskeletal physiotherapy programs in Australia and New Zealand will continue to offer programs of a high standard. The formal review process described by the APA Charter of Educational Standards is the result of this investigation.

The APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards describe the minimum standards of competency determined by MPA for physiotherapists completing a postgraduate course in musculoskeletal physiotherapy. The process for determining competency of graduates as defined in the Charter represents a distinct change in the type of measurement previously used by MPA for reviewing programs. When the Charter is fully implemented, MPA will move to alter the relevant Bylaws to reflect this change.

The APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards form part of MPA specialisation process. The specialisation process is currently under review and the competency standards will be included in future descriptions of the specialization process.

The development of the Australian Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards has followed extensive and exhaustive consultation with the Heads of School or Department of Physiotherapy, the course coordinators of musculoskeletal physiotherapy programs in Australia and New Zealand and members of the physiotherapy profession. In particular, the course coordinators have been closely involved with the development of the Charter since 1993 through the Biennial Australasian Musculoskeletal Physiotherapists' Symposium.

Finally, it should also be noted that the Australian Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards have been reviewed by all National Special Groups of the APA. These groups have provided valuable feedback to MPA for preparation of this draft of the document.

Preamble

Musculoskeletal physiotherapy is a specialised area of clinical practice within physiotherapy that provides comprehensive assessment, diagnosis and conservative management for patients with physical and psychosocial dysfunctions and associated impairments. Dysfunctions maybe manifest in the spine and extremities through pain and other problems of the neural, musculoskeletal and associated systems.

Musculoskeletal physiotherapy is practised by many physiotherapists with entry level knowledge and skills. Physiotherapists who wish to develop advanced expertise in the area undertake postgraduate coursework programs in the area of musculoskeletal physiotherapy offered by tertiary education institutions. These programs provide graduates with greater knowledge, skills and understanding of the speciality of musculoskeletal physiotherapy. In particular, the musculoskeletal physiotherapist demonstrates the following:

- an advanced understanding of the scope of practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy
- an advanced ability to apply knowledge, understanding and skills to ensure musculoskeletal physiotherapy intervention strategies, including prevention and rehabilitation, meet the specific needs of individual patients
- an appreciation of the importance of research as a basis for evidence-based musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice
- an ability to acquire, interpret and manage knowledge that will enhance professional practice throughout the physiotherapist's career

Musculoskeletal physiotherapy services are used by the profession and external stakeholders such as compensible bodies, for assessment, diagnosis and management of patients with dysfunctions of the musculoskeletal system. The dysfunctions encountered in musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice are often complex and multifactorial. Musculoskeletal physiotherapy is practiced a variety of settings including both public and private health care sectors and within industry. Depending on the clinical setting, musculoskeletal physiotherapists may work with a variety of health care professionals

ranging from general and specialist practitioners in the medical/surgical field to rehabilitation teams, occupational therapists, podiatrists and specialists within the field of ergonomics. Competent musculoskeletal physiotherapists can plan and implement an extensive range of management strategies appropriate to the setting in which the patient is being assessed and managed.

Philosophy

Musculoskeletal physiotherapy has enjoyed a strong presence in postgraduate courses offered by universities in Australia and New Zealand for many years. The philosophy of the APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards is to continue to promote and support courses that are of high quality and meet the needs of the profession in the area of musculoskeletal physiotherapy. The principal intent of APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards is to define standards for MPA recognition of postgraduate courses in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

The APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards are specific to musculoskeletal physiotherapy and are intended to be used in conjunction with the course evaluation process described in Section 1 of the APA Charter of Educational Standards. The principal intention of the use of the APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards together with the course evaluation process described in the Charter is to assist MPA in the recognition of courses as part of their specialisation process. In particular, the APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards recognise the attributes that underlie competencies specific to musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice as well as attributes that are required for life long learning.

The relevance of some aspects of the APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards may alter with time and the document must be considered in a dynamic framework that requires regular revision and amendment to reflect changes in musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice. Annual revisions will include input from course coordinators of postgraduate musculoskeletal physiotherapy courses in Australia and New Zealand and members of the profession with clinical expertise in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Course Evaluation Process

The course evaluation process is described in Section 1 of the APA Charter of Educational Standards. MPA is the relevant APA National Special Group with respect to the evaluation of musculoskeletal physiotherapy courses. A Charter Manager who reports to the NPDC will be responsible for the administration of the course evaluation process. A Course Review Panel will conduct the course evaluation process. The Review Panel for each musculoskeletal physiotherapy course will be appointed by MPA in consultation with the respective Head of School.

A postgraduate musculoskeletal physiotherapy course will be recognized by MPA when the Course Review Panel determines that students completing the course achieve at least 60% of the performance criteria for every element of competency described in this document.

Competency Standards for Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy

Competencies are a combination of attributes that underlie some aspect of professional performance¹. It must be emphasised that the competency standards defined in this document address the most significant competencies required by a physiotherapist completing a University based postgraduate course in musculoskeletal physiotherapy. It must be noted that the scope of musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice encompasses other competencies that have not been included in these standards, but will be achieved during some postgraduate courses.

Whilst the competencies are defined within areas, interdependence of these areas is assumed for clinical practice. Each area of competency is further described in terms of the identifiable, constituent components. These components are referred to as elements. Each element of competency is further defined by one or more performance criteria.

The performance criteria provide outcome-based measures that define the minimum standards of performance expected of a physiotherapist who is completing a postgraduate course in musculoskeletal physiotherapy. It is expected that a physiotherapist would need to meet the majority of performance criteria for every element of competency to be deemed competent in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

Areas of Competency in Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy

As a physiotherapist acquires advanced knowledge and skills in physiotherapy practice, the core areas of competency described in the Australian Physiotherapy Competency Standards (1994) become highly integrated and translate to advanced levels of competency. The areas of competency described in the APA Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency Standards are advanced competencies considered to be important for effective performance in musculoskeletal physiotherapy. The competencies represent the integration of elements of competency and relevant attributes that should be possessed by a musculoskeletal physiotherapist. The areas of competency considered most important for effective performance in musculoskeletal physiotherapy are:

1. Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Approach
Applies advanced knowledge and understanding relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy.
2. Assessment
Assesses the patient's abilities, problems and needs through appropriate history taking, interview and physical examination.
3. Interpretation and Management Plan
Develops an appropriate musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management plan based on the interpretation of the assessment findings.
4. Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Management and Intervention Skills
Implements and evaluates the effectiveness of a musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management plan.

¹ Australian Physiotherapy Competency Standards (1994)

5. Communication
Demonstrates advanced communication skills needed to establish a collaborative relationship with the patient and relevant stakeholders including other members of the health team.
6. Documentation
Documents and reports on musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management and other activities relevant to the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy in a timely and appropriate manner.
7. Professional, Legal and Ethical Approach
Demonstrates professional behaviour appropriate to musculoskeletal physiotherapy.
8. Role as a Service Provider
Recognises the role of a musculoskeletal physiotherapist as a service provider within the health care system.

More detailed explanations of each area are in the Appendix to this document.

Attributes of a competent musculoskeletal physiotherapist

The level of competence of a physiotherapist is contingent upon possession of relevant attributes¹. It is the integration of the specific attributes and elements of competency that expresses the unique aspects of musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.

The competent musculoskeletal physiotherapist will have an integration of the following attributes:

- advanced knowledge of aspects of biomedical and clinical sciences relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice
- understanding of the role of the musculoskeletal physiotherapist
- advanced interpretation and problem solving skills
- advanced technical skills and psychomotor abilities
- advanced communication skills
- professional attitudes, behaviour and ethics

These attributes enable the competent musculoskeletal physiotherapist to address the specific needs of individual patients.

¹ Australian Physiotherapy Competency Standards (1994)

Areas and Elements of Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Competency

Area 1: Applies advanced knowledge and understanding relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

- 1.1 Demonstrates advanced knowledge of biological and medical sciences relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy.
- 1.2 Demonstrates advanced knowledge of musculoskeletal physiotherapy approaches to patient management.
- 1.3 Demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge of the evidence based approach to the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy.
- 1.4 Demonstrates a broad understanding of the patient and the patient's problem.
- 1.5 Demonstrates an understanding of the theoretical bases for the application of the scientific method in the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy.
- 1.6 Demonstrates skills to acquire, manage and interpret knowledge within the context of musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.

Area 2: Assesses the patient's abilities, problems and needs through appropriate history taking, interview and physical examination

- 2.1 Collects history and supplementary data relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy and the needs of the patient.
- 2.2 Collects quantitative and qualitative data relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy from the patient.
- 2.3 Makes justifiable decisions regarding a diagnosis reflecting current knowledge of neuromusculoskeletal pathophysiology relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy.
- 2.4 Communicates effectively with the patient.
- 2.5 Documents musculoskeletal physiotherapy assessment findings accurately.
- 2.4 Establishes the need for referral and further investigation of the patient.

Area 3: Develops an appropriate musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management plan based on the interpretation of the assessment findings.

- 3.1 Develops an appropriate rationale for the most appropriate physiotherapy management strategies to meet the patient's needs.
- 3.2. Establishes short and long term goals relevant to the most appropriate musculoskeletal physiotherapy management of the patient's condition.

3.3 Develops a clinical musculoskeletal physiotherapy management plan, based on theoretical knowledge, evidence base and contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice for the patient's presenting condition.

3.4 Incorporates relevant evaluation procedures within the musculoskeletal physiotherapy plan.

Area 4: Implements and evaluates the effectiveness of a musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management plan.

4.1 Ensures the safe and effective implementation of appropriate musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management at an advanced level.

4.2 Effectively evaluates the results of musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management.

4.3 Makes appropriate judgments on the effectiveness of musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management.

4.4 Modifies appropriately the musculoskeletal clinical management program, in accordance with evaluation results.

Area 5: Demonstrates advanced communication skills needed to establish a collaborative relationship with the patient and relevant stakeholders including other members of the health team.

5.1 Communicates written and verbal information in a manner that is clear, unambiguous and easily understood by the patient and other members of the health team.

5.2 Demonstrates the ability to provide the appropriate environment for effective communication.

5.3 Responds professionally to information conveyed by the patient.

5.4 Appraises literature and presents relevant information effectively to groups of people such as professional peers, sports team personnel and the wider community.

Area 6: Documents and reports on musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management and other activities relevant to the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy in a timely and appropriate manner.

6.1 Prepares all documentation appropriate to the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy within appropriate timeframes.

6.2 Considers relevant medico-legal requirements when preparing documentation.

Area 7: Demonstrates professional behaviour appropriate to musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

- 7.1 Demonstrates a commitment to optimal patient care.
- 7.2 Has a commitment to excellence in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.
- 7.3 Demonstrates commitment to ethical practice for the musculoskeletal physiotherapist and acts in accordance with legal requirements.
- 7.4 Applies informed judgment and current scientific principles to musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 7.5 Demonstrates an awareness of principles for safe practice and the relevance of workload issues in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

Area 8: Recognises the role of a musculoskeletal physiotherapist as a service provider within the health care system.

- 8.1 Demonstrates awareness of the role of musculoskeletal physiotherapy in the current health system and relevant related systems and services.

Performance Criteria for Assessment of Competency Standards in Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy

Area 1: Applies advanced knowledge and understanding relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy

Element 1.1 Demonstrates advanced knowledge of biological and medical sciences relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

- 1.1a Demonstrates a sound theoretical knowledge of normal anatomy, pathology, pathophysiology, pathomechanics, kinesiology, psychology and pain sciences as the basis for assessment and management of the patient.
- 1.1b Demonstrates extensive knowledge of the clinical patterns (including aetiology, pathology, presenting symptoms and examination findings) encountered in musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 1.1c Demonstrates advanced understanding, application and monitoring of the processes of clinical reasoning and the need to develop strategies of expert reasoning.
- 1.1d Understands the principles of musculoskeletal physiotherapy assessment.

Element 1.2 Demonstrates advanced knowledge of musculoskeletal physiotherapy approaches to patient management.

- 1.2a Demonstrates extensive knowledge and understanding of musculoskeletal physiotherapy approaches to clinical management
- 1.2b Recognises the benefits and limitations of the various musculoskeletal physiotherapy approaches, including the evidence base, to patient management.

Element 1.3 Demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge of the evidence-based approach to musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.

- 1.3a Demonstrates an understanding of the evidence which supports musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 1.3b Demonstrates an understanding of the need for development of further evidence through quality research and skilled reflective reasoning.
- 1.3c Demonstrates an understanding of outcome based research and patient-based outcomes in clinical management

Element 1.4 Demonstrates a broad understanding of the patient and the patient's problem.

- 1.4a Demonstrates awareness of the factors which may impact on patient function such as cultural, social, environmental and value systems.

- 1.4b Explains the assessment findings to the patient and assists the patient to make informed decisions regarding his/her management
- 1.4c Identifies and implements strategies to enable the patient to actively participate in the management program.

Element 1.5 Demonstrates an understanding of the theoretical bases for the application of the scientific method in the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

- 1.5a Demonstrates an understanding the concepts of validity, reliability and test construction (including normative and criterion referenced) in the context of current musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 1.5b Demonstrates an understanding of the theoretical bases of assessment tools in the context of current musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 1.5c Demonstrates knowledge of the variety of assessment tools available for use in musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 1.5d Recognises the need for and the role of research in advancing the body of knowledge in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

Element 1.6 Demonstrates skills to acquire, manage and interpret knowledge within the context of musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.

- 1.6a Demonstrates the ability to ask relevant questions.
- 1.6b Demonstrates the ability to critically review concepts and ideas.
- 1.6c Demonstrates the ability to think creatively and debate issues.
- 1.6d Demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge.
- 1.6e Demonstrates an understanding of the limitation of the current knowledge base.
- 1.6f Demonstrates an understanding of the effects of advances in knowledge.

Area 2: Assesses the patient’s abilities, problems and needs through appropriate history taking, interview and physical examination

Element 2.1 Collects history and supplementary data relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy and the needs of the patient.

- 2.1a Obtains current and past history of the presenting complaint from the patient and, when necessary and appropriate, other stakeholders.
- 2.1b Establishes the characteristics of the patient's complaint including the location, nature and behaviour of the symptoms.
- 2.1c Reviews relevant past and current medical history and treatment.
- 2.1d Identifies symptom characteristics that may indicate serious pathology or disorders that necessitate caution, contraindication or the need for referral to an appropriate medical practitioner.
- 2.1e Establishes whether diagnostic tests relevant to the presenting complaint have been performed.
- 2.1f Establishes relevant current and past use of pharmacological agents by the patient.
- 2.1g Identifies factors that influence the ability of the patient to provide accurate information such as pain status, chronicity of the condition, understanding, feelings, attitudes/beliefs regarding the complaint and its management, apprehension towards the examination process, impact of the problem on lifestyle, occupation and leisure activities.
- 2.1h Modifies and orders the components of the physical examination plan with recognition of, and respect for, the patient's personal factors, severity and irritability of symptoms, associated conditions and other relevant influences.

Element 2.2 Collects quantitative and qualitative data relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy from the patient.

- 2.2a Carries out a systematic, efficient and prioritised physical examination appropriate to musculoskeletal physiotherapy and the patient's presenting complaint, while accommodating any limitation imposed by the patient’s condition as per 2.1h.
- 2.2b Accurately assesses the neuro-musculo-skeletal system pertinent to the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy including specific tests relevant to the patient’s condition.
- 2.2c Demonstrates examination skills pertinent to the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy.
- 2.2d Reviews the available diagnostic tests relevant to the patient's condition.

- 2.2d Recognises the risks and the safety precautions necessary in relation to musculoskeletal physiotherapy assessment and selects or modifies the assessment procedures accordingly
- 2.2e Interprets the assessment results, recognising the limitations of what can be inferred from them.

Element 2.3 Makes justifiable decisions regarding a diagnosis reflecting current knowledge of neuromusculoskeletal pathophysiology relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy

- 2.3a Identifies the primary cause of the patient's presenting condition.
- 2.3b Identifies predisposing and contributing factors influencing the patient's condition.
- 2.3c Determines the patient's prognosis by applying knowledge of musculoskeletal physiotherapy and biological sciences, analysing the patient's requirements and applying or designing appropriate tests of performance.
- 2.3d Determines expected outcomes of intervention based on contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.

Element 2.4 Communicates effectively with the patient.

- 2.4a Demonstrates advanced effective and flexible communication skills during the history taking, interview and physical examination to obtain information communicated verbally or non-verbally by the patient.
- 2.4b Provides the patient with sufficient information in relation to the physiotherapy diagnosis, treatment plan and expected outcome to ensure the patient is able to actively participate and respond appropriately to the information.
- 2.4c Demonstrates the ability to explain what musculoskeletal physiotherapy is about, what its purpose is, its implications and its limitations.
- 2.4d Communicates appropriately with medical or non-medical parties involved in the patient's care.

Element 2.5 Documents musculoskeletal physiotherapy assessment findings accurately.

- 2.5a Documents all assessment findings accurately, consistently and legibly.
- 2.5b Documents provision of all relevant information and obtaining of consent according to current medicolegal requirements.

Element 2.6 Establishes the need for referral and further investigation of the patient.

- 2.6a Recognizes the limitations of musculoskeletal physiotherapy assessment.

- 2.6b Refers the patient to the appropriate health care personnel for assistance in the diagnosis of the patient's condition, when necessary.
- 2.6c Refers the patient to the appropriate health care personnel for assistance in the formulation of an appropriate management plan, when necessary.
- 2.6d Refers the patient to other physiotherapy colleagues who have more expertise in the clinical management of the patient's identified problem, when necessary.
- 2.6e Refers the patient to other relevant professional colleagues where the issues or problems identified are not appropriate for musculoskeletal physiotherapy management or require a multidisciplinary approach.

Area 3: Develops an appropriate musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management plan based on the interpretation of the assessment findings.

Element 3.1 Develops a logical rationale for the most appropriate physiotherapy management strategies to meet the patient's needs.

- 3.1a Develops a clinical management plan, in collaboration with the patient, based on the accurate interpretation of the assessment findings and the identification of the relevant clinical indicators for the management plan.
- 3.1b Recognises personal factors of the patient which will influence the management plan.
- 3.1c Includes strategies for self-management based on the patient's understanding, needs and abilities.
- 3.1d Identifies the indications, contraindications, risks and safety precautions relevant to the musculoskeletal physiotherapy management of the patient's condition.
- 3.1e Demonstrates an ability to develop an appropriate physiotherapy management plan with respect to the factors identified in 3.1d.

Element 3.2. Establishes short and long term goals relevant to the most appropriate musculoskeletal physiotherapy management of the patient's condition.

- 3.2a Prioritises the examination findings and their interrelationships to address the appropriate needs and expectations of the patient, in the context of the underlying pathophysiology and pathomechanics of the patient's condition.
- 3.2b Establishes short and long term goals based on the interpretation of the clinical assessment findings in consultation with the patient and the referring party.
- 3.2c Establishes realistic time-frames and appropriate clinical indicators for the short and long-term goals taking into account pertinent factors such as the patient's relevant past history, possible pain mechanisms, the recognised rates of healing for the underlying pathology, any associated conditions, and predisposing and causative factors.
- 3.2d Identifies appropriate time frames for the patient's return to work, sport or other activity in collaboration with the patient and other stakeholders based on pathophysiology and pathomechanics of the patient's condition.
- 3.2e Establishes appropriate short and long term goals and timeframes with respect to current scientific knowledge and contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 3.2f Demonstrates an understanding of the influence of the patient's personal factors on the goal-setting process.

- 3.2g Displays appropriate communication skills by involving the patient in the goal-setting process.
- 3.2h Documents all short and long-term goals in an accurate and appropriate manner.

Element 3.3 Develops a clinical musculoskeletal physiotherapy management plan, based on theoretical knowledge, evidence base and contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice for the patient's presenting condition.

- 3.3a Demonstrates a broad knowledge of musculoskeletal physiotherapy skills and approaches to clinical management of clinical patterns encountered in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.
- 3.3b Selects the most appropriate intervention with respect to the patient's personal factors such as age, cultural background, occupation and ability to communicate, and the beliefs and expectations of the patient.
- 3.3c Selects the most appropriate treatment intervention with respect to the status of the underlying pathology, the presence of any contraindications or special precautions, the anticipated response to intervention for the patient's presenting condition.
- 3.3d Selects contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy intervention where appropriate, which reflects current biomedical, biopsychosocial and scientific knowledge and established musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice for the management of the patient's presenting condition.
- 3.3e Understands the factors that influence the effectiveness of musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management such as the patient's personal factors, pain mechanisms, associated conditions and clinical status.

Element 3.4 Incorporates relevant evaluation procedures within the musculoskeletal physiotherapy plan.

- 3.4a Selects the most appropriate evaluation procedures based on the patient's condition, the reported reliability and validity of recognised outcome measurements, within the context of the results of the interpretation and analysis of the clinical examination findings.
- 3.4b Understands the need for continual evaluation of all facets of the patient's condition during all phases of the implementation of the musculoskeletal physiotherapy management plan.
- 3.4c Recognises the limitations of current scientific knowledge and contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy management of the patient's condition, and considers these in the expected outcomes of the evaluation process.
- 3.4d Applies appropriate clinical reasoning to relate the evaluation procedures to the goals of management and the expected outcomes based on recorded contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.

3.4e Demonstrates effective communication skills in the planning and implementation of the evaluation process.

Area 4: Implements and evaluates the effectiveness of a musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management plan

Element 4.1 Ensures the safe and effective implementation of appropriate musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management at an advanced level.

- 4.1a Demonstrates a high level of expertise, including safe handling, when delivering a wide range of basic and advanced musculoskeletal physiotherapy interventions.
- 4.1b Performs an intervention with precision and accuracy with respect to the selected site of application.
- 4.1c Demonstrates effective communication skills to discuss with the patient the proposed treatment intervention, the expected outcomes that may result from the intervention and to gain appropriate patient feedback whilst the intervention is being applied.
- 4.1d Gains informed consent after discussing the probability of any risks that may occur.
- 4.1e Demonstrates the ability to modify intervention during the treatment session in response to feedback from the patient and evaluation of the intervention.
- 4.1f Demonstrates appropriate documentation of obtaining informed consent from the patient where necessary, and of the specific treatment interventions and management strategies employed, including the immediate response to these actions.

Element 4.2 Effectively evaluates the results of musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management.

- 4.2a Demonstrates appropriate clinical reasoning skills to determine when the evaluation should occur, the most important factors to be evaluated and the degree of variation from the expected outcomes that is unacceptable..
- 4.2b Selects the most appropriate form of evaluation as it relates to the patient's condition, the status of the underlying pathology, and relevant personal factors of the patient such as age, expectations and beliefs.
- 4.2c Demonstrates expertise in using the most appropriate outcome measurement tools and clinical skills to evaluate the immediate and latent effects of the specific musculoskeletal physiotherapy intervention.
- 4.2d Evaluates the progress of the patient's condition in response to musculoskeletal physiotherapy interventions as it relates to the predicted clinical pathway, clinical indicators and short and long-term goals.
- 4.2e Exhibits effective communication skills in the collection of data pertaining to the outcome of musculoskeletal physiotherapy intervention.

Element 4.3 Makes appropriate judgments on the effectiveness of musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management.

- 4.3a Identifies and collates the most appropriate clinical data to support a comprehensive evaluation process.
- 4.3b Applies sound clinical reasoning in the interpretation of the outcome of musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management in the context of the goals for management, the pathological state of the patient's condition, and the outcome expectations as related to contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 4.3c Recognises the potential limitations of the effectiveness and scope of the current musculoskeletal physiotherapy management plan in regard to the predicted clinical pathway, clinical indicators and the determined short and long-term goals.
- 4.3d Understands the potential influences of the patient's personal factors, pain mechanisms, associated condition and clinical status on the effectiveness of the implemented management program.
- 4.3e Understands the potential influences of predisposing and contributing factors in the effectiveness of the implemented musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management program.

Element 4.4 Modifies appropriately the musculoskeletal clinical management program, in response to the evaluation results.

- 4.4a Recognises the factors that are influencing the effectiveness of the musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management program, and modifies these factors (if possible) to optimize the outcome of the intervention whilst not compromising the safety of the patient.
- 4.4b Selects intervention modifications that reflect current scientific and biomedical knowledge, and are within the scope of contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 4.4c Implements changes in the musculoskeletal physiotherapy management program effectively and safely.
- 4.4c Demonstrates effective communication skills during discussions with the patient regarding any proposed modification to the musculoskeletal physiotherapy management plan, and the expected outcome of the change.
- 4.4d Recognises the need for appropriate referral to other professionals when the expected outcomes are not being achieved as predicted or for further evaluation of the patient's condition.
- 4.4e Demonstrates legible and accurate documentation of modifications to management.

Area 5: Demonstrates advanced communication skills needed to establish a collaborative relationship with the patient and relevant stakeholders including other members of the health team.

Element 5.1 Communicates written and verbal information in a manner that is clear, unambiguous and easily understood by the patient and other members of the health team.

- 5.1a Provides relevant information to the patient and other stakeholders including members of the health team.
- 5.1b Utilises different communication styles and tools and communicates in language appropriate for the reader or listener.
- 5.1c Utilises appropriate interpreters for those who are non English speaking or have English as a second language.
- 5.1d Communicates in a manner appropriate to the understanding of the patient.

Element 5.2 Demonstrates the ability to provide the appropriate environment for effective communication.

- 5.2a Creates an atmosphere which enhances good rapport with the patient.
- 5.2b Creates and maintains conditions for effective communication including active listening and opportunity for questions.
- 5.2c Demonstrates sensitivity to feelings and responses communicated both verbally and non verbally.
- 5.2d Demonstrates an awareness of barriers to communication including cultural, social and health related factors and implements appropriate strategies to overcome these barriers.

Element 5.3 Responds professionally to information conveyed by the patient.

- 5.3a Maintains confidentiality with respect to information conveyed by the patient at all times.
- 5.3b Communicates appropriate information to other professionals after gaining consent from the patient.

Element 5.4 Appraises literature and presents relevant information effectively to groups of people such as professional peers, other health practitioners and the wider community.

- 5.4a Demonstrates the ability to resource and review relevant scientific and biomedical literature and recorded contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy practices.

- 5.4b Demonstrates the ability to synthesise information from the review of relevant scientific and biomedical literature and recorded contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy practices and present pertinent facts in appropriate formats to other physiotherapists, other health professionals and the wider community.

Area 6: Documents and reports on musculoskeletal physiotherapy clinical management and other activities relevant to the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy in a timely and appropriate manner

Element 6.1 Prepares all documentation appropriate to the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy within appropriate timeframes.

- 6.1a Documents all aspects of assessment and management according to the guidelines of the workplace.
- 6.1b Prepares physiotherapy reports in written form, as required.
- 6.1c Utilises different report writing styles according to the circumstances and documents in an accurate, clear and concise manner.
- 6.1d Retains copies of documentation as required by the workplace.

Element 6.2 Considers relevant medico-legal requirements when preparing documentation.

- 6.2a Complies with the confidentiality requirements of the Australian Physiotherapy Association's Ethical Principles and the Australian Physiotherapy Competency Standards 1994.
- 6.2b Complies with the Privacy and Consent legislation when providing information to other service providers.
- 6.2c Accesses appropriate medico-legal information as required by the workplace.
- 6.2d Gains informed consent where appropriate and shows an awareness of the implications.

Area 7: Demonstrates professional behaviour appropriate to musculoskeletal physiotherapy

Element 7.1 Demonstrates a commitment to optimal patient care.

- 7.1a Demonstrates a caring attitude and concern for patient welfare.
- 7.1b Demonstrates knowledge and application of musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice and related areas, including relevant biomedical knowledge.
- 7.1c Recognises personal and professional strengths and limitations, implements appropriate actions accordingly and acknowledges the abilities and roles of others.

Element 7.2 Demonstrates a commitment to excellence in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

- 7.2a Demonstrates intellectual curiosity, a commitment to professional development, the ability to adapt to advances in knowledge and to apply learning to the workplace.
- 7.2b Demonstrates an ability to adapt to advances in musculoskeletal physiotherapy and related areas.
- 7.2c Promotes the role of musculoskeletal physiotherapy as an evidence based health care provider within the health care system.

Element 7.3 Is committed to ethical practice for the musculoskeletal physiotherapist and acts in accordance with legal requirements.

- 7.3a Understands and complies with Australian Physiotherapy Association Code of Conduct and Ethical Principles.
- 7.3b Demonstrates and applies knowledge of the current medico-legal requirements relating to musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 7.3c Maintains professional therapist-patient relationship.

Element 7.4 Applies informed judgement and current scientific principles to musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.

- 7.4a. Seeks evidence and appraises research relevant to musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 7.4b Demonstrates an ability to acquire relevant knowledge and to apply learning to musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 7.4c. Demonstrates an ability to adapt to advances in musculoskeletal physiotherapy and related areas, including relevant biomedical knowledge.

Element 7.5 Demonstrates an awareness of principles for safe practice and the relevance of workload issues in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

- 7.5a Applies preventive strategies such as varying the physical demands of work, limiting the number of patients treated per day, scheduling rest breaks, use of height adjustable work surfaces and ergonomic set up of other equipment.
- 7.5b Recognises the importance of identification of transferable skills, adequate income protection insurance and career planning in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

Area 8: Recognises the role of a musculoskeletal physiotherapist as a service provider within the health care system

Element 8.1 Demonstrates awareness of the role of musculoskeletal physiotherapy in the current health system and relevant related systems and services.

- 8.1a Recognises the need to gain knowledge of the implications of any national health strategies or directives for musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.
- 8.1b Understands the role of the musculoskeletal physiotherapist within the current medical, occupational health and educational models of service delivery and within the local community.
- 8.1c Works with other service providers to access relevant community, health and related services according to the needs of the patient.
- 8.1d Demonstrates professional accountability when providing service within the framework of the current health care system.

APPENDIX

Explanation of Areas of Competency in Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy

Area 1: Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Approach

Musculoskeletal physiotherapy is a specialised area of clinical practice within physiotherapy which provides comprehensive assessment, diagnosis and conservative management for patients' physical and psychosocial dysfunctions and their associated impairments manifest through the pain and other problems of the neural, musculoskeletal and associated systems in the spine and extremities.

The musculoskeletal physiotherapist has an advanced knowledge and understanding of pain and disorders of the neural and musculoskeletal systems. Musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice requires advanced knowledge of assessment and diagnostic procedures and extensive knowledge and understanding of the diverse range of approaches to management of pain and neuro-musculoskeletal disorders including strategies for rehabilitation and prevention.

A musculoskeletal physiotherapist's approach to provision of physiotherapy services includes an understanding of the evidence based approach to health care and the rights of the patient to actively participate in their health care management. Musculoskeletal physiotherapy is a patient focused approach. Patients are empowered to make informed decisions about their care through a process of education and advocacy of self management strategies.

To develop the appropriate depth of knowledge and understanding of the body of knowledge required for practice in the field of musculoskeletal physiotherapy, the principles of scientific method must be understood by the musculoskeletal physiotherapist. Skills to acquire, interpret and manage knowledge are also essential.

Area 2: Assessment

A musculoskeletal physiotherapy assessment includes collection of quantitative and qualitative data from the patient and an analysis of the data to formulate a musculoskeletal physiotherapy diagnosis and management plan for the patient's condition.

A sound theoretical knowledge of biological, medical, psychosocial, behavioral and clinical sciences provides the basis for an assessment by a musculoskeletal physiotherapist. A musculoskeletal physiotherapy assessment includes an interview and physical examination to develop an understanding of the patient's problem(s) and associated effects on his/her life. Based on this understanding a prognosis is formulated and the appropriateness, form and level of musculoskeletal physiotherapy management is established. Other information regarding the patient's presentation obtained from sources other than the patient should be included in the interpretation of the assessment.

Assessment is a continual process throughout the management of the patient.

Area 3: Interpretation and Management Plan

A musculoskeletal physiotherapist is able to develop the appropriate clinical management plan based on their interpretation of the assessment findings. The plan demonstrates sound clinical reasoning and includes short and long-term management goals that are relevant to the patient's condition and other personal factors. The management plan and goals are determined collaboratively with the patient and other stakeholders. It reflects sound knowledge of biomedical and biopsychosocial concepts and contemporary musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice.

Area 4: Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Management and Skills

A musculoskeletal physiotherapist is able to safely and effectively implement all facets of the appropriate clinical management plan. Treatment interventions are applied with precision and specificity whilst showing due regard for the patient's condition and the patient's expectations and beliefs.

A musculoskeletal physiotherapist must demonstrate sound clinical reasoning in making judgments regarding the effectiveness of specific treatment interventions. These judgments must be incorporated into an evaluation of the overall clinical management plan and be used to determine the direction and content of further clinical management.

Area 5: Communication

A musculoskeletal physiotherapist requires advanced communication skills to gain a full appreciation of the patient's needs, expectations and beliefs and how they are likely to impact on the assessment and management of the patient. The musculoskeletal physiotherapist must be able to communicate effectively with the patient and all stakeholders including other members of the health team to provide optimal patient care.

Area 6: Documentation

Documentation shall be appropriately prepared according to the relevant protocols, taking into consideration medico-legal requirements for the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

Protocols include those of the workplace, compensable body or other requesting party.

Area 7: Professional, Legal and Ethical Approach

Professional behaviour encompasses a commitment to optimal patient care, support of and participation in the practice of musculoskeletal physiotherapy and ethical principles and legal requirements. A musculoskeletal physiotherapist must be cognizant of the inherent dangers in terms of personal physical injury during musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice and implement strategies to prevent injury and deal with injury if it occurs.

Area 8: Role as a service provider

An effective accountable service provider within the health care system has a knowledge of the role of musculoskeletal physiotherapy within the physiotherapy profession and its relationship to the health care system and other related systems.

