

Rawhiti Health Centre

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Public Submission
Review Physio Services
Work Place- ACC Policy
Department of Labour
P O Box 3705
WELLINGTON

Although I am not offering an official submission to the review of physiotherapy services, I wish to offer my support to Mr LaPine & Mr Hood who like myself have had recent and ongoing problems with threatening to remove our bulk billing privileges.

I have been a physiotherapist for 30 years, the past 20 years of which I have spent in Geraldine, a small South Canterbury town, as a private therapist. Over these 20 years I have had ongoing problems with ACC including investigation for fraud, various accusations of being an 'outlying' physiotherapist and now this serious threat to remove my bulk billing if I don't conform to limiting the number of patients I treat to their perceived treatment profiles.

When I first worked with ACC, patients were given every help with no limit of treatment and full reimbursement of material cost used, which is what the original act set out to give – comprehensive injury cover. Over the years this cover has been reduced, and now if you are not an EPN provider, you can no longer function as a physiotherapist.

This EPN process should have remained independent of ACC but has been hijacked and now, as with the case of Mr LaPine if you have "rattled the cage" of ACC and even if you have passed selection of EPN you are denied a contract. I was in the process of organising for EPN but realise that my previous experiences with ACC would not warrant the effort.

My belief is that patients' rehabilitation outcomes are most important and not financial limits used by ACC in their treatment profiles. ACC have made their limits to restrict service to patients and any further treatments over these guidelines have to be pleaded for and justified.

With my 30 years experience, I feel I can assess if a patient needs my treatment and as 75% of my patients' travel 50kms or more to come to my practice, without travel remuneration, my feeling is that they also deem treatment to be appropriate.

ACC in the past have used cost per injury as their bench mark when comparing physiotherapy practice and yet now when I have asked on various occasions to get a comparative costing between EPN practices and Bulk Billed practices this information is not given. To me this seems odd that a few years ago the outcome was based on what we billed ACC for each injury and now this information is not considered important. My assumption is that Bulk rolled Physios are treating individual injuries for less than EPN physios' - so why the ongoing investigations? I work in an area where all practices are accredited except me and yet patients travel and pay surcharge past EPN doors, for treatment of which my competency is being questioned, what does it say of the other physios in South Canterbury?

My feeling is ACC, as a monopoly, and has had the power they perceived they have, has gone to their heads. They have bullied patients, declined treatment and ongoing rehabilitation and have harassed physiotherapists until only a few remained outside their control. It appears to be a continual battle between ACC and us as treatment providers and instead of what is best for the patients we have to continually assess treatment if it comes within ACC's guidelines. – Competency of a Physio should not be judged as being an ACC puppet and purely considered on economic consideration.

This ongoing harassment by ACC and limitation to patient rehabilitation has no basis in Law and when asked to supply changes to the ACC Act we are basically told "we are ACC/ so we can do what we like" – This manipulation of power that ACC perceive they have has to stop and they need to become more user friendly. They are funded by the tax payer of New Zealand who have given up their right for litigation for fair rehabilitation to the maximum extent practicable.

This review is long overdue and one hopes the public of New Zealand get an insight into what has been happening inside ACC over the past 10 years. If not for the efforts of Peter Brown, APPA and Physio Trust in bringing this to public attention I feel this is the last chance for our once internationally acclaimed Rehab system.

This ongoing bullying by ACC has taken its toll and this year, 2007, will be my last as a practising physiotherapist. The continual battling for patient's rights and ongoing questioning of my competency has taken all the satisfaction and pleasure of assisting patients to return to their normal working duties. ACC appears determined to undermine this most necessary medical profession. I no longer have the faith in the system to deliver what I believe is a basic right to fair rehabilitation.

If you require me as a witness to ACC policy I will be only too happy to travel to your Inquiry.

*Yours,
Christopher.*