

Letter to the Physiotherapy Inquiry

785 Portobello Road
Dunedin 9014

Public Submissions
Review of Physiotherapy Services
Workplace-ACC Policy
Department of Labour
PO Box 3705
Wellington

Dear Ms Salter,

Please find attached my submission to the Physiotherapy Inquiry. I know that the scope of the review is aimed at the Physiotherapy Profession and how it is funded by the Accident Compensation Corporation, however I believe that it is important to conduct such a review within the context of how these factors impact on injured people.

Because of this, I felt that it is my duty to write a submission explaining some of the problems that I have had with my treatment and rehabilitation.

In Summary, I would like to give evidence and submissions relating to my experiences:

- I have been denied Physiotherapy treatment for my injuries.
- I have experienced my physiotherapy treatment being terminated without my injury being fully rehabilitated.
- My physiotherapist was forced to limit the number of times I was treated because they had to apply to ACC for ACC "approval" to keep treating me.
- I have been told that ACC will not pay for any more physiotherapy treatments.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,



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SUMMARY

1. I was involved in an accident where **I received a prolapsed disc L5-S1**. I suffered from an injury on **1/9/89**
2. I needed treatment so that I could be rehabilitated and get my life back on track.
3. I went to Di Turnbull at 9 Morangi Street Broad Bay Dunedin. I would like to give evidence and submissions relating to my experiences because:
 - I have been denied Physiotherapy treatment for my injuries in the past.
 - I have experienced my physiotherapy treatment being terminated without my injury being fully rehabilitated.
 - My physiotherapist was forced to limit the number of times I was treated because they had to apply to ACC for ACC "approval" to keep treating me.
 - I have been told that ACC will not pay for any more physiotherapy treatments in the past.

BACKGROUND

I am 46 years old and I have been to see a physiotherapist several times in my life for various injuries. In the early 1990's I went to see a physiotherapist in Dunedin and found her to be very supportive. I saw them once or twice a week for 12 months because I had a very debilitating back injury and was awaiting diagnosis and approval for spinal surgery. I found her very supportive and at no stage did she have to stop treating me prior to surgery.

RELEVANT FACTS

I have been denied physiotherapy treatment for my injuries.

During the mid 90's after having spinal surgery, I went to see Di Turnbull for on going maintenance acupuncture treatment. I was told that ACC would not fund any further physiotherapy treatment. I paid for the treatment myself and was therefore able to continue part time in the work force. I have been able to continue working however I

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still have the pain, and I believe that I was not rehabilitated to the maximum practicable extent.

The Physiotherapist told me that ACC would not fund further treatment because of a policy of ACC. I had apparently had 'my quota' even though I was not fully rehabilitated and because I had already had the prescribed number of treatments, the ACC would not fund any more.

I believe that when my treatment was stopped, my injury was not better. I still had symptoms and in my opinion, my symptoms were relieved by the physiotherapy treatment.

Since the mid 90's I have continued to fund my own physiotherapy acupuncture treatment. In early 2005 my GP reapproached ACC to request long term funding of acupuncture through my current physiotherapist Wendy Lockhart. ACC agreed to fund on the basis that I would be assessed by a multidisciplinary pain clinic. I agreed to this and a report was done. This required a full day of assessments with a pain specialist, a physiotherapist and a psychologist. It was agreed that acupuncture was appropriate in my situation and should be considered for funding on a long term basis. ACC agreed to fund my acupuncture on a long term basis as a result of the recommendation.

Over the past year my physiotherapist has applied for 2 lots of 12 treatments on ACC32's and these have both been approved. She does however have to apply for 'approval' each time the 12 treatments are reached. Just yesterday, both Mrs Lockhart and I received a letter from Robyn Hastie from Medical Fees stating that further information was required from my specialist before they could approve another lot of 12 treatments. I rang Ms Hastie and explained that I had undergone a significant and expensive process required by ACC to determine if long term acupuncture was appropriate for my injury. Long term acupuncture was approved in December 2005 by the Dunedin Branch medical advisor on the basis of a report from Dr Rick Acland (Pain specialist) and there should be no question that long term acupuncture is part of my rehab. She stated that if I could fax her the information she would look at it and be able to make a decision.

While I wait for approval I have continued with the treatment. If ACC does not approve the ACC 32, then I will have to pay for the treatments myself as I have done over the past 10 years. This seems to be a huge waste of time and money given that approval has already been given and is just another example of the hoops one has to jump through in order to get appropriate treatment.

I am aware of the "Provider Profiling Benchmark Reports" and how these are used by ACC to "change provider behaviour". If the treatment provider gives more treatments than "average", they are at risk of being rated as "poor or very poor" I am concerned that measures like this are impacting on my physiotherapist. The focus should be on my treatment and rehabilitation. The measure of success should be improvement in my condition and symptoms, rather than minimising the number of treatments I receive.

HOW THIS IMPACTED ON ME AND MY TREATMENT

When I am receiving physiotherapy treatment, I am able to continue working 15 hours per week. Fortunately I have been able to pay for my acupuncture in the past as it is an important part of my maintenance. However had this not been the case my quality of life would be severely affected as a result of my injury and resulting sequalae.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I don't agree that it is right for ACC to make decisions about, and limit, my Physiotherapy Treatment. I believe that I have a right to continue to be treated until either I am better, or the treatment is not helping.

I believe that the ACC has developed a system where there are too many approvals and paperwork requirements and it takes too long to make decisions. I believe that this is a deliberate tactic used by ACC policy makers to put barriers to treatment in place.

I believe that the system needs to be changed from an unfair system to a system which is transparent and actually provides treatment to restore my health to maximum practicable extent. I also believe that the treatment providers should be free to make clinical judgements without undue outside influence from the Accident Compensation Corporation or any other person or organization.

Submission to the Physiotherapy Inquiry

This is the submission of:

Denise Powell
785 Portobello Road
Dunedin 9014

I do not wish to appear before the inquiry to give evidence and speak to my submission.

I can be contacted at:

0274136371

This Submission is structured in the following manner:

- Summary
- Background
- Relevant Facts
- How this impacted on me and my treatment
- Further Information
- Request to be present and give evidence to the Inquiry
- Recommendations

This submission is made by Denise Powell on the 1st of March 2007


Denise Powell