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Canadian Physiotherapy Association Association canadienne de physiothérapie

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**For immediate release**

**First-ever national advertising campaign makes physiotherapy more accessible to Canadians**

**Toronto (February 16, 2010)** – Today marks the launch of the first-ever national advertising campaign in the 90-year history of physiotherapy in Canada. Commercials about physiotherapy will air on the CTV national network, TSN, and Sportsnet during coverage of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver when large numbers of Canadians will be tuning in. The ads will also be appearing on CBC's News Network and TVA's Salut Bonjour. A companion print ad will follow to extend the reach of the message, in time for May, which is National Physiotherapy Month. This national advertising campaign is the result of a major communications initiative led by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) with the support of its branches, divisions and components.

The ads feature physiotherapists (members of CPA) providing hands-on treatments for a variety of health conditions in a variety of clinical settings. They describe physiotherapists as accessible, university-educated, and patient-centred primary health care practitioners. The ads are aimed at increasing public awareness of what physiotherapists do so that Canadians will understand the many benefits of physiotherapy and choose to seek treatment when appropriate. The overall goal of the ad campaign is to make physiotherapy more accessible to all Canadians.

The need for a national ad campaign highlighting access to physiotherapy is compelling. Research shows 73% of Canadians have had experience with physiotherapy and 84% of Canadians are satisfied with the physiotherapy services they have received. While it's clear that physiotherapy is familiar and effective, more than 60% of Canadians don't realize that they do not need a doctor's referral to consult a physiotherapist. As a result of this confusion, Canadians are not getting timely access to physiotherapy, treatments are being delayed, and recovery and rebound from injury and illness are not accomplished within a reasonable time period.

The facts are, while physician referral is a valuable way to access physiotherapy services, Canadians have the right to consult a physiotherapist anywhere in Canada by direct access. Many Canadians already self-select and go directly to local physiotherapists for treatment when they need it, however, 60% of Canadians are unsure about how to access the service. With definitive evidence showing that patient self-referral to physiotherapy improves health outcomes, decreases time lost from work, and costs less within the health care system<sup>1</sup>, there's good reason for this physiotherapy advertising campaign.

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<sup>1</sup> Mitchell J. de Lissovoy G. A comparison of resource use and cost in DA versus physician referral episodes of physical therapy. *Phys Ther.* 1997;77 (1):10-18

“Necessary physiotherapy services should be accessible to all Canadians without delay,” says Alice Aiken, PhD, PT, President of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association. “Canadians are able to decide for themselves that they want to see a physiotherapist and they should be able to access physiotherapy, free of unwarranted legislative, bureaucratic, or economic constraints. Facilitating timely, direct access to a local physiotherapist is the most important goal of the CPA’s national advertising campaign”, adds Dr. Aiken, “because when patients see a physiotherapist without delay, they get better faster and can return to work sooner.”

In addition to advertisements, CPA has developed a companion website which provides important new and updated information for Canadians in need of physiotherapy. The information is presented in a user-friendly format, describing what physiotherapists do, giving examples of the conditions they treat, and providing answers to common questions including what to look for in a physiotherapist. In addition, there’s a comprehensive directory that will help Canadians find a qualified, registered physiotherapist close to home. To find out more about CPA’s national advertising campaign and companion website, visit our website [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca).

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