

March 2006

Guidelines for physiotherapists issuing sick leave certificates

Effective 27 March 2006 physiotherapists are legally authorised to provide patients with documents certifying illness, referred hereto as 'sick leave certificates' in accordance with the Workplace Amendment Act 2005. This document provides guidance for APA members on the issuing of sick leave certificates.

Sick leave certificates are legal documents and must be issued only when, in the professional opinion of the physiotherapist, the patient is unfit for work due to the injury or a condition for which they have consulted the physiotherapist. Physiotherapists must not issue certificates for conditions which are outside their scope of practice. Nor must they issue certificates fraudulently. Unless the issuing of a sick leave certificate can be clinically justified it must not be issued under any circumstances.

The following information should be contained in the sick leave certificate:

- Name and address of the physiotherapist issuing the certificate
- Name of the patient
- Date on which the certificate was issued
- Date(s) on which the patient is unfit for work
- A physiotherapist should only include the diagnosis on the certificate with prior patient consent.
- Sick leave certificates should be issued on the physiotherapist's letterhead.

The physiotherapist should note in the patient's clinical record when and for how long sick leave certificates have been issued. It is expected that the clinical record will include sufficient information to justify the issuing of the certificate. At no time shall the physiotherapist provide information to a third party about the certificate, unless legally compelled to do so, without the patient's explicit consent.

Sick leave certificates must only be dated on or from the day on which they were written. In all matters pertaining to the issue of sick leave certificates, APA members must abide by the APA Code of Conduct.

Disclaimer:

This position statement has been prepared having regard to general circumstances, and it is the responsibility of the practitioner to have express regard to the particular circumstances of each case, and the application of this statement in each case. In particular, clinical management must always be responsive to the needs of individual patients, resources, and limitations unique to the institutions or type of practice. Position statements have been prepared having regard to the information available at the time of their preparation, and the practitioner should therefore have regard to any information, research or material which may have been published or become available subsequently. While the APA endeavours to ensure that statements are as current as possible at the time of their preparation, it takes no responsibility for matters arising from changed circumstances or information or material which may have become available subsequently.

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