Informed Consent for the Physical Therapy Patient

MAC Physical Therapy Group LLC expects physical therapists to ensure that the patient/client or responsible party (parent, spouse, guardian, caregiver, etc.) has given appropriate consent before any physical therapy is undertaken.

Informed consent is based on the moral and legal premise of patient/client autonomy, whereby a patient’s/client’s decision to participate in examination/assessment, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis/plan, intervention/treatment and re-examination, as well as in any research activity, is freely given by a competent individual: who has received the necessary information; who has adequately understood the information; and who, after considering the information, has arrived at a decision without having been subjected to coercion, undue influence, inducement, or intimidation.

Patients/clients have the right to make decisions about their own participation in examination/assessment, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis/plan, intervention/treatment, re-examination, as well as in any research, without their physical therapist trying to influence the decision. Patient autonomy does allow for physical therapists to educate the patient/client, but does not allow the physical therapist to make the decision for the patient/client. Informed consent protects the individual's freedom of choice and respects the individual's autonomy.

Competent individuals should be provided with adequate, intelligible information about the proposed physical therapy. This information should include a clear explanation of the examination, evaluation, treatment, diagnosis, prognosis, length of treatment and cost.

The physical therapist should ascertain the ability of the patient/client to understand the above before seeking consent. When the individual is not deemed competent or when the patient/client is a minor, a legal guardian or advocate may act as a surrogate decision-maker.

Physical therapists should record in their documentation that informed consent has been obtained.

Physical therapists working in team situations are responsible for ensuring that appropriate consent arrangements have been made prior to any examination/assessment, intervention or research. While another member of the team may acquire the consent, it does not negate the physical therapist's responsibility for ensuring that the patient/client is properly informed about the physical therapy service to be rendered.

MAC Physical Therapy Group PLLC require all their employees to:

- physical therapists comply with all national and local legal and procedural requirements for informed consent
- the responsibility of the physical therapist in relation to informed consent is an essential component of entry level professional physical therapist education programs
- the responsibility of the physical therapist in relation to informed consent is included in professional standards, codes of conduct and ethical principles