



AFRM POSITION STATEMENT

Endorsement: Two statements concerning the role of the Rehabilitation Physician were developed by a working party of the Faculty Policy and Advocacy Committee in May 2008. The statements were endorsed by AFRM Policy and Advocacy Committee on 18 June 2008 and ratified by Faculty Council on 30 July 2008.

Title: **THE ROLE OF THE REHABILITATION PHYSICIAN**

The following is a brief summary of the key aspects of the role and scope of the Rehabilitation Physician:

Rehabilitation Physicians diagnose and assess a person's function associated with injury, illness or chronic conditions, to maximise their independence and improve and maintain quality of life.

Rehabilitation Physicians provide specialist knowledge and expertise in the prevention, assessment, management and medical supervision of a person with a disability.

Rehabilitation Physicians evaluate medical, social, emotional, work and recreational aspects of function.

Rehabilitation Physicians work with children and adults using an evidence based collaborative approach with other disciplines, having a unique overview of the skills and expertise of other health professionals, to develop a patient-centred, individualised treatment plan in a range of settings including home, public and private hospitals, and community rehabilitation centres and clinics.

Areas of clinical practice include paediatric, adult and geriatric rehabilitation for: neurological disorders (including stroke, cerebral palsy, spinal injury, brain injury, spasticity and MS); musculoskeletal and orthopaedic conditions (including fractures, joint replacements, arthritis, osteoporosis, and sporting injuries); acute and chronic pain (including back, neck and nerve pain); amputations; occupational injuries; cardiorespiratory disorders; other complex or chronic conditions including cancer and burns.

This summary may help formulate a statement concerning the role of a rehabilitation physician in documents such as media releases, promotional materials, government submissions etc.



The following statement is a summary of the different dimensions of the Rehabilitation Physician:

Rehabilitation Physicians in their role as **doctors**:

- diagnose by history taking, examination and investigation.
- assess limitation of activity and restriction of social participation.
- prescribe medications, exercises, adaptive devices, and modifications.
- intervene through neuromuscular and musculoskeletal injections and procedures.
- predict possible outcomes.
- consult, refer and report with medical colleagues.
- measure and benchmark clinical outcomes.

Rehabilitation Physicians in their role as **advisors**:

- communicate with patients and their carers.
- provide support and counselling.
- advocate for patient's rights and resources.
- persevere to achieve optimal outcomes.

Rehabilitation Physicians in their role as **educators**:

- learn from and teach peers and trainees, patients and carers.
- participate in medical education programs to teach principles of rehabilitation management.
- liaise with and advise government and administrators.
- promote health in individuals and groups by preventing disability.
- engage in research and development of Rehabilitation Medicine.

Rehabilitation Physicians in their role as **managers**:

- solve complex problems in individuals and organisations.
- coordinate and lead multi-disciplinary rehabilitation services.
- monitor, review and report on rehabilitation issues.
- certify abilities and outcomes.

This statement may help guide the development of appropriate assessment and training of Rehabilitation Physicians, and may assist in formulating statements describing the unique role and skills of the Rehabilitation Physician in health care provision.