

POSITION STATEMENT – OBESITY

POLICY POSITION

Primary care providers should make referrals to Registered Kinesiologists as a first line of treatment for obesity and comorbid chronic conditions. Integrate Kinesiologists into interdisciplinary care teams, particularly those with a focus on treating obesity.

RATIONALE

EXERCISE AND MENTAL HEALTH

In Ontario, physical inactivity creates an economic burden of \$3.4 billion. Obesity costs Ontario about \$4.5 billion.

There is broad consensus within the medical and public health communities that physical activity yields wide-ranging health benefits. Moreover, no other single intervention or treatment is associated with such a diverse array of benefits. The lack of physical activity counseling in a clinical setting represents a lost opportunity to improve the health and well-being of patients, and with minimal cost.

In Ontario, Kinesiologists are a regulated health profession. This means Kinesiologists can integrate seamlessly into the health care system if given the opportunity, including handling client information confidentially. This status should be exploited by medical professionals to its fullest by incorporating referrals to Kinesiologists to deliver guided exercise as a front-line treatment.

WHY A KIN?

Physical activity is an “essential tool for health maintenance” in treating obesity, according to *Obesity in Canada*, a 2016 report by the Senate of Canada’s Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.¹ The report noted that the Public Health Agency of Canada has moved from a traditional awareness-based approach to promoting innovative, multi-sectorial initiatives in partnership with public, private and not-for profit entities.

¹ Ogilvie, Kelvin Kenneth and Eggleton, Art. Obesity in Canada. Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. March 2016.
https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/SOCI/Reports/2016-02-25_Revised_report_Obesity_in_Canada_e.pdf

Among the recommendations contained in *Obesity in Canada* are the following:

- *Encourage improved training for physicians regarding diet and physical activity;*
- *Promote the use of physician counselling, including the use of prescriptions for exercise;*
- *Bridge the gap between exercise professionals and the medical community by preparing and promoting qualified exercise professionals as a valuable part of the healthcare system and healthcare team*

According to the Senate report, “The rising rate of obesity is symptomatic of the increasing rates of a variety of chronic conditions,” including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke and certain cancers. Collectively, these conditions are responsible with 48,000 and 66,000 deaths in Canada each year. Obesity itself is a risk factor for many chronic diseases due to several factors, including increased weight creating greater strain on the heart and on joints.

Regular exercise is widely accepted as an essential lifestyle behaviour that contributes to chronic disease prevention and management, and is thus fundamental in maintaining optimal function and independence.² Exercise and physical activity are recognized as among the most effective means to both prevent and manage chronic disease. In fact, exercise is known to have benefits in treating a broad range of conditions:

Depression	Metabolic syndrome	COPD
Anxiety	Polycystic ovarian syndrome	Asthma
Stress	Type 2 diabetes	Cystic fibrosis
Schizophrenia	Type 1 diabetes	Osteoarthritis
Smoking	Hypertension	Osteoporosis
Dementia	Coronary heart disease	Back pain
Parkinson's disease	Heart failure	Rheumatoid arthritis
Multiple sclerosis	Stroke	Breast cancer
Hyperlipidemia	Peripheral arterial disease	Colon cancer
Obesity/BMI		Prostate cancer

Kinesiologists are best positioned to deliver this service. Kinesiologists are experts in exercise and human movement, and specialize in helping patients develop and execute specialized exercise programs.

Kinesiologists can deliver these services effectively as parts of interdisciplinary care teams, in which the regulatory standing of Kinesiologists ensures they deliver guided exercise therapy and confidently work with other allied providers to gain an understanding of the patient's needs and comorbid conditions, while communicating information back to the primary care physician in a fully confidential manner.

Primary care providers can also integrate Kinesiology by making referrals. OKA's website, oka.on.ca, includes a Kin Finder feature which makes it easy for a primary care provider to locate a Kinesiologist in a given community. Through referrals to local Kinesiologists, guided exercise can be made a part of treating obesity.

² Kokkinos, P. (2012). Physical Activity, Health Benefits, and Mortality Risk. *ISRN Cardiology*, 2012, 1–14.

