

Exercise, Movement and Health Benefits

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Why is Exercise not better integrated into Health Benefit Packages? The Interest is clear. The need is clear. The science is clear.

Kinesiologists are exercise and movement science health professionals that can bring all the extensive health benefits of exercise to the healthcare of plan sponsors, plan members and health insurers. A majority of plan members are looking for help covering the cost of professional health-related exercise are on the hunt for more options, but too few plan sponsors are taking seriously the advantages of exercise to improve health outcomes, prevent and manage dozens of chronic physical and mental health conditions, add more appeal to plan packages and reduce pharmaceutical costs.

In Ontario, Kinesiology is a regulated health profession, with a scope of practice that ranges from injury and pain rehabilitation to diabetes care, cardiac and cancer recovery and high blood pressure, to relief from anxiety and depression. As Kinesiologists become a more established part of the health landscape, plan sponsors and benefits providers can meet the demand for exercise by including Kinesiology coverage as part of their overall health and wellness packages.

The interest is clear. According to survey data from the 2020 Sanofi (now Benefits Canada) healthcare survey nearly 9 in 10 plan sponsors want their insurer to go ahead and make products and services related to chronic disease management available through their plan, rather than having to opt in. Plan members agree: Only 36 per cent of plan members with a chronic disease think their current benefits plan coverage is enough.

The services plan members are looking for include the kinds of services Kinesiologists

offer. When Benefits Canada surveyed the sector in 2021, the most in-demand services members sought were fitness classes (30 per cent) and fitness trainers (29 per cent). Kinesiologists can ensure a science-based, healthcare approach to adding these types of services.

The need is clear. Two of three Ontarians have one or more chronic conditions, causing three in four deaths in the province in 2015 alone. Across the country, musculoskeletal disorders make up 40 per cent of lost-time workers' compensation claims. We know chronic conditions are on the rise: Diabetes alone is expected to affect 2.2 million Ontarians by 2024, costing the economy \$7.6 billion annually. Nationwide, medical treatment for chronic conditions costs Canadians \$190 billion every year. These conditions lead to not only significant personal costs, but hundreds of millions of dollars of lost productivity nationwide, along with increased risk of acute injury on the job. Chronic conditions are often comorbid with mental health conditions like depression and anxiety, which can in turn lead to behaviours that increase the risk of further chronic conditions. In fact, poor health is three times more common among those who report significant emotional distress. Issues like these make physical and mental chronic disease prevention, management and rehabilitation paramount – all areas where Kinesiologists excel.

The science is clear. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, exercise contributes to the prevention and management of more than 25 physical and mental chronic conditions, from diabetes to heart conditions to depression and anxiety to even certain types of cancer. A 2015 study by the American Medical Association notes that there is “overwhelming evidence” that regular exercise is “one of the most powerful health-promoting practices that physicians and other health care professionals can recommend.” Not only that, “no other single intervention or treatment is associated with such a diverse array of benefits.”

Plan sponsors that offer Health Spending Accounts and Wellness Spending Accounts provide access to Kinesiology. In 2021, approximately 39 per cent of Canadians with a benefits package have access to a Health Spending Account and 19 per cent include Wellness Spending Accounts, both of which may be used to cover the services of a Kinesiologist in Ontario.

Kinesiology provides a pathway to ensure plan members receive exercise services through regulated and accountable professionals who specialize in addressing both physical and mental chronic conditions. This is especially important considering that, in 2021 alone, nearly half of plan members delayed getting care for a condition due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Kinesiologists are trained and government-regulated experts in custom-tailoring physical activity programs towards treating the onset of dozens of existing chronic conditions, preventing second and third chronic conditions from occurring in plan members as well as the rehabilitation of injuries and other pains and strains.

If Kinesiology is not part of your overall health benefits package, now is the time to consider incorporating it.

Ontarians want exercise services. Plan sponsors want sustainability and preventative care for chronic conditions. The equation is clear: Kinesiology delivers both. No competitive benefits package is complete without Kinesiology – and there's no better time to join the Kinesiology Movement.



Kinesiologists are Embracing Virtual Care

Virtual care is increasingly a reality in Canadian health care, and Kinesiologists are embracing the platform with good results.

In a 2021 survey of members the Canadian Kinesiology Alliance and Ontario Kinesiology Association, 83 per cent of Kinesiologists who responded said they deliver virtual care. And it's delivered strong outcomes: In two-thirds of cases, Kinesiologists report that virtual care has shown equal or better results for patients. That's compared to 24 per cent who weren't sure and just 11 per cent who reported challenges.

What do Kinesiologists do virtually? The most common services offered are exercise prescription (53 per cent) and education and coaching (44 per cent). Another 26 per cent of Kinesiologists say they undertake musculoskeletal assessments virtually, while 11 per cent say they'll do ergonomic assessments virtually.

Zoom has proven to be by far the most popular platform for Kinesiologists: About 47 per cent of respondents use it. Smaller percentages prefer platforms like Ardcare, Telus, Doxy.me and others.

For those Kinesiologists who don't already offer virtual care, 77 per cent say they're either considering expanding into it or planning for alternative options.

Kinesiologists have embraced the transition to virtual care and shown they can deliver positive results remotely. Through keeping abreast of current trends in care delivery, Kinesiologists are making it easier than ever for clients to access the science of human movement.

If you'd like a copy of the CKA/OKA roster of Kinesiologists delivering virtual care, click [here](#) and we'll send it along.



Kinesiology, Coaching and Your Brain: A Case Study

Exercise-based care isn't just about the body. Physical and mental health are connected – and Kinesiologists can play an important part in treating mental health conditions like depression, as this case study demonstrates.

In this case study, a Kinesiologist worked with a patient describing multiple consecutive low

mood days and a persistent feeling of failure. These feelings were so severe that the patient struggled with activities of daily living, including simple things like showers and self-care. Over the course of treatment, the Kinesiologist built a program that helped the patient's mental health symptoms and find her way back into the workforce.

The patient, a single mother in her 30s, had a history of anxiety, depression and self-harm along with tendonitis of the shoulder and prediabetes. She was referred to the Kinesiologist for guidance in exercise and healthy living.

The Kinesiologist conducted both subjective and objective assessments to gauge the woman's level of function. For the subjective assessment, the Kinesiologist assessed the patient's goals and habits, then guided the patient through self-rating of eating and exercise habits and completion of a pain scale. The patient rated their energy levels, perceived stress, coping habits, negative feelings and anxieties. The Kinesiologist assessed these findings based on two scales: General Anxiety Disorder 7 (GAD-7) and the Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9).

The Kinesiologist then assessed objective attributes by completing several physical tests. These included a Functional Movement Screening (FMS) and assessments of body anthropometrics, grip strength, weight, body mass index, waist, chest and hip circumference and waist to hip ratio. The Kinesiologist also conducted range-of-motion assessments for the patient's shoulder and arm, recognizing the history of tendonitis, tingling and pain in the limb.

The results of those assessments informed the plan the Kinesiologist developed for the patient. The treatment strategy was based on exercise, education and self-reflection, with a substantial focus on behavioural change. The Kinesiologist helped the patient understand factors standing in the way of success, as well as how to regress, progress and modify exercises when necessary. Treatment also included reflection and habit-tracking to gauge the patient's level of self-help.

A significant part of the treatment was focused on mental health. Beyond exercise, the Kinesiologist utilized motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioural therapy skills throughout the course of treatment. She also used through records and choice points to document the patient's progress and help her avoid anxious flare-ups. Part of the treatment included teaching the patient techniques like breathing exercises and body scans to control anxiety.

Within six months, the patient had improved significantly: She reported a consistently positive mental health state, with fewer fluctuations and greater self-management skills. She re-engaged with her social life and became more consistent with following her exercise program. When the Kinesiologist surveyed her after that six-month period, her pain had fallen from 9 out of 10 to a range of 0 or 1 out of 10, with decreases in depression and anxiety.

The patient's success was such that she was ultimately able to find a job, allowing her to

get off Ontario Works and re-enter the workforce. At time of reporting, the patient was continuing to improve, showing better mood, and feeling more confident and hopeful.

Kinesiologists are Canada's experts in mobility as health care, but they deliver more than just exercise guidance. They're experts in behavioural change and coaching – elements that play an important part in caring for complex mental and physical health conditions. That element is even more vital for Canadians with chronic conditions, for whom it can be more difficult to stick to a regimen or determine what level of fitness works for them and their condition.

Coaching helps Canadians stick with a program. Kinesiologists are experts in coaching, including for Canadians with complex conditions. That's why no benefits package is complete or competitive without Kinesiology.

Consistent Standard of Care from Kinesiologists Across Canada

Kinesiologists are a regulated health profession in Ontario, making it the first province to regulate the profession and opening the door to fully integrating all the benefits of exercise into healthcare. Across the country, Kinesiologists are working towards achieving regulatory status. But even as work continues, Kinesiologists from coast to coast have adopted the professional standards set in Ontario through the Canadian Kinesiology Alliance.

The Canadian Kinesiology Association (CKA), the national not-for-profit group representing the Kinesiology profession, has made those standards their baseline. They've adopted the regulations set out by Ontario's provincial regulator – the College of Kinesiologists of Ontario – as a baseline for the profession in the rest of the country. Not only does that mean Kinesiologists across Canada are following Ontario's lead, it means the nationwide profession is achieving a single, consistent national standard, ensuring patients in any province get the same high standard of care from any Kinesiologist.

As Kinesiologists, we know the value and need for exercise in the healthcare sector. Two of three Ontarians have one or more chronic conditions, causing three in four deaths in the province in 2015 alone. Across the country, musculoskeletal disorders make up 40 per cent of lost-time workers' compensation claims. Issues like these make prevention, management and rehabilitation paramount – areas where

Kinesiologists excel. Exercise and physical activity can reduce the risk of over 25 chronic conditions according to the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Even as Kinesiology associations across Canada work towards achieving regulatory status, CKA-aligned provincial associations have recognized the importance of consistency. The standards adopted in Ontario represent a strong baseline for the practice of Kinesiology. By working to those standards, Kinesiologists in all parts of Canada can ensure clients they're following consistent, professionally-set standards – achieving the highest possible level of care.

Plan members deserve to know they're in professional hands. Plan sponsors deserve to know they're offering services provided by experts. From coast to coast, Canada's Kinesiologists are committed to meeting the highest standards in the field.

Find Out More

About Kinesiology

Kinesiology is the science of human movement and exercise. From cells to society, Kinesiology uncovers the biomechanical, physiological, neurological, and psychosocial mechanisms that drive human function and performance and applies them to improve health and wellbeing.

The practice of kinesiology is the assessment of human movement and performance and its rehabilitation and management to maintain, rehabilitate or enhance movement and performance. (Kinesiology Act, 2007. c. 10, Sched. O, s. 3)

The Ontario Kinesiology Association (OKA) is a non-profit health professional organization with a membership of more than 1,500 registered health professionals. The OKA actively works on behalf of its members to promote Kinesiology as an integral part of Ontario's healthcare and workplace health and safety systems.