The Hong Kong Physiotherapists' Union's Position Statement on Clinical Application of Medical Devices by Physiotherapists

Regarding the "Proposal of Regulatory Framework on Medical Devices" the LC Paper No. CB(2)545/16-17(01) presented in the Legislative Council on 6th February 2017, the Hong Kong Physiotherapists' Union (HKPU) hereby presents the following position statement to safeguard public health interest:

1. Clinical application of medical devices is commonly employed in physiotherapy to patients. All registered physiotherapists in Hong Kong are accredited to be well equipped in the appropriate use of medical devices in their undergraduate, post graduate (if applicable) training and other continuous professional education.

2. Locally trained physiotherapy students have spent over 200 hours in the 4-year undergraduate academic curriculum in both theory and practical sessions of medical devices before they are supervised to apply onto patients clinically during their 1000 hours Clinical Education in real clinical settings.

3. In actual clinical practice, all registered physiotherapists locally or internationally educated, are well equipped with the knowledge of clinical pathologies and good patient screening and clinical judgment to ensure patient safety. The treating physiotherapist is required to apply the professional knowledge they attained to the implementation of appropriate parameters, such as frequencies, wavelengths, power, intensity and application methods of the medical device he/she employs, to achieve the optimal effectiveness of the different kinds of physical energies on the electromagnetic spectrum in patient management.

4. There are professional guidelines which include patient assessment for indications and contra-indications, pre-application functional tests on the medical device(s), and dosage appropriateness of the medical device(s) for different conditions and stages.

5. Upholding the ethics of a health care provider, it is mandatory for a physiotherapist to obtain verbal or written consent from patients after they have completed a thorough assessment for the area treated and have identified an indication for the medical device(s) to be employed in the treatment

regime.

6. List of medical devices (not exhaustive),commonly used by Physiotherapists may include:

- Superficial thermal agents – hot packs, paraffin baths, dry heat, whirlpool tanks
- Deep thermal agents – shortwave diathermy
- Cryotherapy - cold packs, ice massage, vapocoolant spray, contrast bath, vaso-pneumatic compression devices
- Ultrasound therapy
- Electrical stimulation (sensory) – transcutaneous electrical stimulation (TENS) and interferential therapy (IFT) for pain management
- Electrical stimulation (motor) – neuromuscular electrical stimulation using low-frequency and medium frequency currents (IFT and Russian current), functional electrical stimulation (FES), and high voltage currents
- Micro-current
- Electromagnetic Field
- Biofeedback
- Laser
- Ultraviolet radiation
- Functional Electrical Nerve Stimulation

7. Physiotherapy practice guidelines for the application of medical device

The treating Physiotherapist shall:

7.1 Complete detailed subjective and objective patient assessments to ascertain the patient's condition.

7.2 Identify the indication and select the most appropriate treatment modalities.

7.3 Identify contra-indication from the information in the Health Declaration form filled by the patient.

7.4 Explain the nature of the selected treatment, its effects and potential risks to the patient.

7.5 Obtain mandatory written patient consent of the physiotherapy care plan and procedures prior to commencement of any treatment procedure. If the patient is under aged or is mentally incapacitated, consent from the guardian or carer shall be obtained.

7.6 Prior to application, test the skin of the area treated of thermal and pin prick sensation.

7.7 Test the output and dosage of the medical device accordingly prior to application to the patient.

7.8 Select the appropriate treatment dosage (frequency, intensity and duration or pre-set programme) to be applied.

7.9 Before commencement of treatment, explain to the patient the expected sensation, possible dangers and risks and that the modality can be stopped at any time when discomfort is felt. Warning signs shall be affixed within the proximity as constant reminder.

7.10 Supply the patient with an alarm bell for alerting the staff of any discomfort during the treatment

7.11 During the treatment, monitor the patient regularly to ensure comfort and safety.

7.12 At the end of the treatment, the area treated shall be evaluated of the skin condition for any adverse effects.

7.13 Mandatory documentation shall include the type of treatment modality, the dosage parameters, the treatment duration, the pre and post treatment effects to ascertain the effectiveness of the treatment.

8. Clients receiving any physiotherapy intervention including medical device(s) shall have the following compliances

8.1 Signed Declaration of Health Conditions

8.2 Written consent for physiotherapy care plan and procedures

8.3 Appropriate use of alarm device available to notify any abnormal feeling during the treatment.

8.4 Beware of the warning signs within the proximity and report any abnormal effect during or after the treatment.