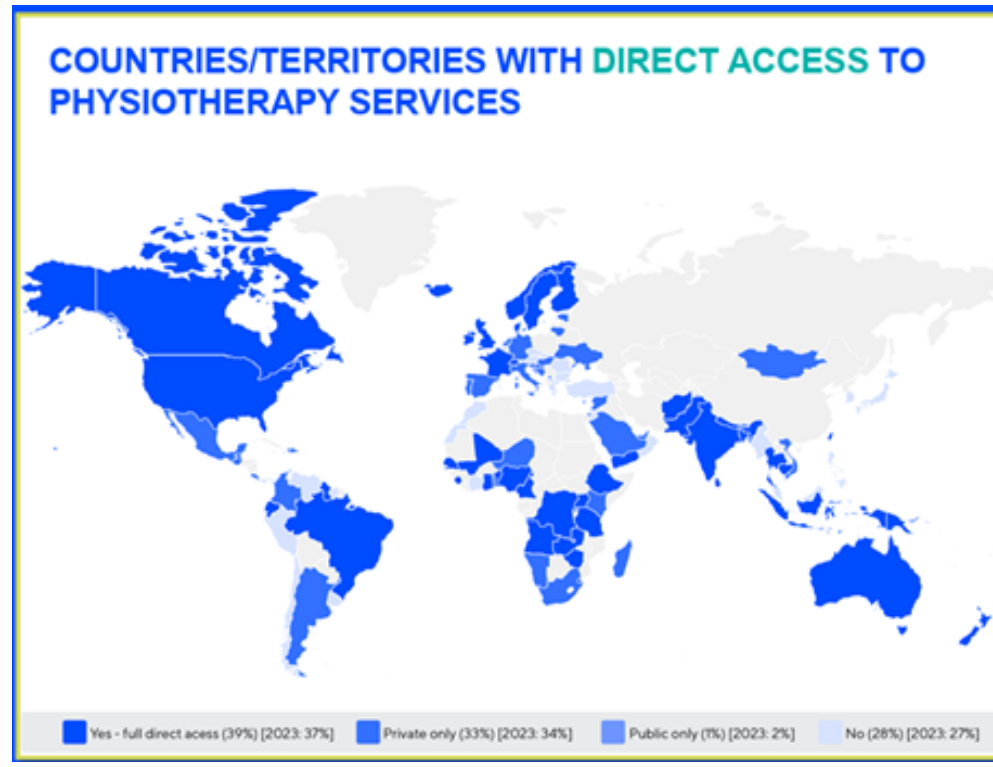


OVERVIEW OF HK PHYSIOTHERAPY DIRECT ACCESS (2026 UPDATED)

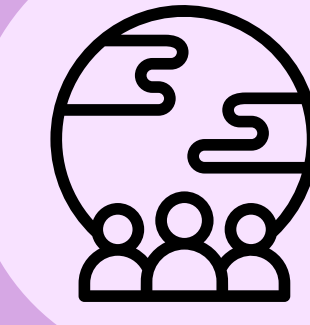


01. Global Overview

1976: Australia implemented direct access to physiotherapy (no referral required).
2024: 73% of countries worldwide have implemented certain level of direct access to physiotherapy.

Currently: Australia accepts physiotherapists from four countries/regions to practise without a licensing exam: the UK, Canada, Ireland, and Hong Kong.

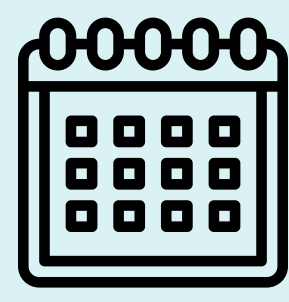
02. International Standards



Express FLYR countries
Canada
The United Kingdom
Ireland
Hong Kong (SAR of China)

International studies indicate that direct access to physiotherapy does not increase safety risks or litigation cases (Moore et al. 2005; Taylor et al. 2011; WCPT 2013; Mintken et al. 2015).

03. Safety & Litigation



The Policy Address proposed direct access to physiotherapy in 2021. Related legislative amendments were postponed five times. The legislation was formally passed in July 2025, empowering the **Primary Healthcare Commission** to develop the relevant clinical guidelines for implementing direct access to physiotherapy.



04. About the Amendment



The Bills Committee was concerned that the Bureau might only open direct access for **low back pain or certain body parts**. The Government promised that the Phase 1 clinical guidelines **would cover musculoskeletal disease symptoms**, and would not be limited to specific body parts such as the low back or the wrist.

05. Bureau's Commitment



In December 2025, the Primary Healthcare Commission announced clinical guidelines under which direct access to physiotherapy can be implemented in **three** main circumstances. However, in practice, the operation relies on administrative restrictions that effectively limit direct access to physiotherapy to only:

Knee osteoarthritis, and Low back pain.

06. Publication of the Guidelines



Clinical Guideline for First-Contact Physiotherapists on Assessment and Cross-disciplinary Management Approach for Common Musculoskeletal Problems in Primary Care Setting



A. A patient has, within the **past 12 months**, obtained proof of diagnosis of a certain disease issued by a registered Western medicine doctor or a Chinese medicine practitioner.

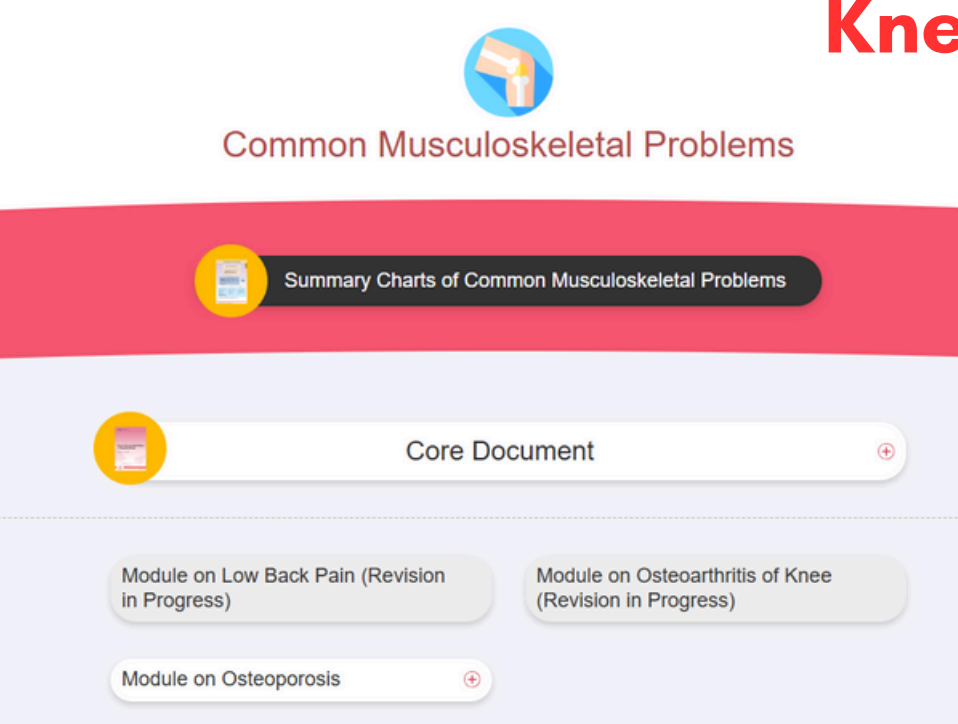
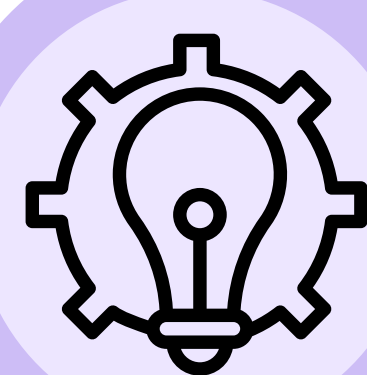
B. Musculoskeletal problems listed in the Hong Kong Primary Care Reference Framework currently cover:

Knee osteoarthritis, and Low back pain.

C. Members of a District Health Centre or District Health Centre Express who, after enrolling in eHealth and being matched with a family doctor, may directly consult a first-contact physiotherapist within the Primary Care Directory and the DHC network. Maximum time required: **up to 9 days (waiting for family doctor endorsement).**

Limited to 8 pain conditions.

07. Guideline Details



- The Primary Healthcare Commission's approach is clearly inconsistent with what the Health Bureau stated during the legislative process, raising suspicions of **deliberately misleading the Bills Committee and the public.**
- The current guidelines are formulated on a "diagnosis-based" approach rather than focusing on "functional limitations", which **runs counter to the principle of "preventive treatment of disease"** and conflicts with "early identification, early treatment."
- Regarding cross-disciplinary collaboration, family doctors may **take up to 9 days to respond** to a physiotherapist's initial consultation request. Family doctors are asked to provide unpaid "endorsement" without having seen the patient, **making the pathway unworkable.**
Direct Access becomes Delay Access.

08. Major Concerns

