

I applaud the Ontario government for considering changes in the scope of practice for health care professionals in order to help alleviate widespread inefficiency in our current system of care. As a physiotherapist, I am particularly pleased by the majority of my College's recommendations, including allowing PTs to communicate a diagnosis, administer oxygen, and order x-ray imaging.

However, I am alarmed by the proposal to allow PTs to order MRIs. In a report issued by the Ontario Institute for Clinical Evaluative Services in June 2008, researchers indicated that one factor behind the fact that Ontarians continue to face long wait times for MRI scans may be that physicians are ordering these tests unnecessarily. As such, I fear that wait times for MRI will become even longer if more professions are given the opportunity to (unnecessarily) order this test.

For the most part, I am also not convinced that knowledge gleaned from an MRI would alter a PT's approach to treatment. For instance, confirming a suspicion of spinal disc herniation would not likely change the prescribed treatment, not to mention that sufficient (if not more) information can likely be gleaned from a thorough clinical examination. PTs may also be at risk of ordering an MRI when a different imaging modality, which they may not have sufficient knowledge of, would actually be more appropriate or informative.

Overall, while I support the majority of the recommendations submitted by the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario, I am staunchly opposed to the proposal to allow PTs to order MRI. I fear that allowing more professions to order MRI will further reduce access to an already exhausted resource.

I also hope that any proposed changes in legislation will be piloted in various regions before going ahead with widespread changes to health care regulations.