



## Why we did this study

Physiotherapy presents as a positive solution to current ACC medical certification challenges in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, this requires legislative change and so the opportunities and considerations needed to be explored from relevant key stakeholder groups.

## How we did it

Qualitative interview-based study with thematic analysis to identify and explore perspectives from stakeholder representatives with diverse backgrounds regarding opportunities and considerations for physiotherapists to complete ACC medical certificates in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## What we found

### Physiotherapists are Ready, Willing, and Able to Support

#### Competent & Regulated

Recognised by the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand as having the necessary expertise and scope to assess function and certify fitness for work.

#### Trusted & Embedded in Communities

Regular, consistent engagement and existing relationships with ACC clients, including Māori, Pacific and rural populations

#### Collaborative

Already work closely with GPs, employers, ACC case managers, and specialists. Able to streamline recovery pathways and reduce health system strain.

#### Familiar with the ACC System

Regular input and interactions with ACC clients, submit claims and treat under ACC, support recovery of function including return to work, understand importance of accurate and positive certification

## Benefits for ALL stakeholders



### Individuals

Improved access, equity, experiences and outcomes, reduced financial strain



### Employers

Timely and informed updates; accurate medical certificates, reduced delays in employee recovery and return to work.



### GPs/NPs

Shared workload and responsibility, reduced pressure; capacity for other important areas within role, reduced pressure on acute and emergency settings



### Physios

Ability to fully support clients within direct-access care; improved continuity and efficiency.



### ACC/Funders

Reduced unnecessary costs; improved recovery and RTW outcomes; better use of system resources.

## Considerations

#### Clear guidelines and training

to ensure competency, within scope, independence, objectivity and appropriate certification.

#### Oversight, support and supervision

to ensure necessary awareness and understanding when certifying, potential register of approved physiotherapists or professional certification panel.

#### Engagement and relatability,

diversity within workforce, coordinate with Māori, Pacific and rural health leaders to support access and equity.

## Why Change Is Needed

- The current process relies heavily on GPs, creating bottlenecks, delays, unnecessary costs and pressure on the health system.
- Patient groups have compromised experiences and outcomes, particularly Māori, Pacific, rural, and low-income communities whom face disproportionate barriers to care and recovery.
- Missed opportunities for timely certification, especially when physiotherapists are already familiar and working with ACC clients.

## Summary

**Physiotherapists can enhance ACC medical certification by improving accessibility and efficiency. This study shows readiness and capability, highlighting the need for legislative changes to benefit diverse stakeholder groups**