

# PHYSIOTHERAPIST'S ROLE

IN THE

# OPIOID CRISIS

**We are calling on all Canadian Physiotherapy Association and American Physical Therapy Association members** to contribute their skills, knowledge and voice to help solve the North American opioid crisis. Together we can make a difference by providing excellent care, to improve the treatment options offered to those with pain.

It is difficult to watch a newscast or pick up a newspaper without seeing reference to the opioid crisis. CPA and APTA are working together to address some of the causes of addiction. Our aim is to not only help reduce the risks of abuse and overdose but to optimize pain management to reduce the need for opioid prescriptions. This involves educating prescribers and the public about physiotherapy as a safe and effective primary care strategy to manage pain.

The numbers are truly staggering:

 **61** deaths per month in BC alone in 2016

 **1 in 8** deaths for Ontarians **25 to 34 years old** is related to **opioids**

While many of these tragic deaths occur due to illicit drug use, an important contributor to the problem is our health care system's emphasis on pharmaceuticals as the first response to pain management. Yet the problem goes far beyond "street drugs". Opioids are proven to be a high-risk approach to treating acute pain, and they are ineffective for chronic pain. We know that there is a better way.

This is not just a big-city problem. This is an international crisis that requires support from physiotherapists and physiotherapist assistants in every part of Canada.

CPA is working with Health Canada and organizations such as the Canadian Medical Association, the Arthritis Alliance of Canada and the College of Family Physicians of Canada to improve our treatment of acute and chronic pain. We are highlighting areas where the federal government can improve access to physiotherapy, notably in First Nations and Inuit health care. We are lobbying for policy changes that can improve direct access to physiotherapy and reduce first prescription of opioids. We are working with our Branches to bring these important messages to provincial and territorial governments.

The long-term solution to the opioid crisis will come when every Canadian has access to the best health care to deal with pain. **As a CPA member, you can help make that happen.** Please do your part: Read up on the issue, talk to your colleagues, share what you know in your community, and as always put the needs of your patients first. Together we will make a difference.



Canadian  
Physiotherapy  
Association

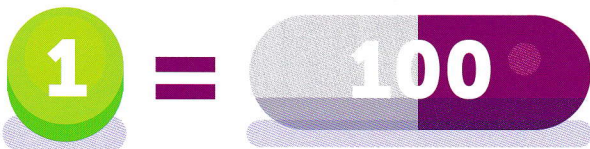
Association  
canadienne de  
physiothérapie



## THE SITUATION

TODAY,  
7

Canadians **will die** from an opioid overdose



**Fentanyl** is 100 times more potent than **morphine**

800

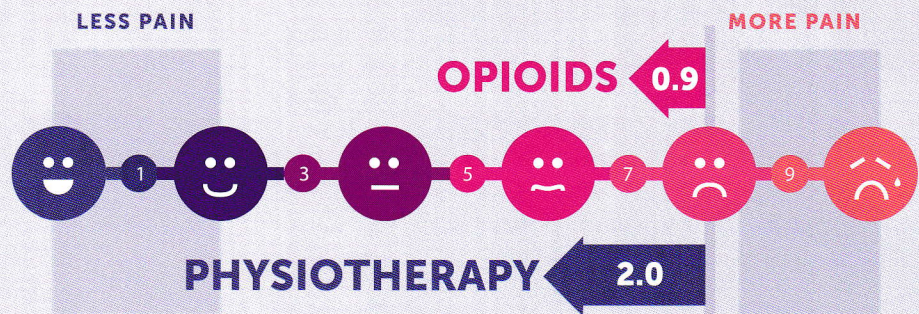
50%

The number of illicit drug **overdose deaths** expected in British Columbia in 2016

The percentage of these deaths which are **expected to involve fentanyl**

## HOW WE CAN HELP

The efficacy of **physiotherapy vs opioids** as rated on the **VAS**. Clinically significant change is  $\geq 1.0$ .



**Be informed.** Pain is one of the main reasons that people seek physiotherapy. Read the latest research and keep yourself current in pain management. Stay tuned for CPA and APTA education and resources for patients and members.



**Share your knowledge** with health care colleagues and managers. Show them how their patients are better off with conservative management of pain.



**Become a member of the Pain Science Division.** Members have access to PSD newsletters, podcasts and blogs. Information is presented in clear language and can be easily incorporated into your practice. Write to [painscience@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:painscience@physiotherapy.ca) for more information.