



Plan Sponsors want services like Kinesiology to manage and prevent chronic conditions

Two in three Ontarians have a chronic condition – and nearly nine in ten benefits plan sponsors are looking to their insurer to help them do more to support members with chronic conditions.

According to Sanofi/Benefits Canada’s 2020 Healthcare Survey, the demand for chronic disease management is high. Just 36% of plan members with a chronic condition think their current plan does enough to support them. Sponsors agree: 88% want their plan to do more to support these members.

Sponsors are looking to insurers for support. Eighty-eight percent of sponsors say they’d prefer their insurer go ahead and make products and services available in their health benefit plan, rather than having to request or opt into these services.

What do service members want most?

Exercise. When Benefits Canada polled again in 2021, the new benefits members wanted were fitness classes and personal fitness trainers, at a combined 59% interested.

The importance of exercise is both physical and financial. Exercise, best delivered through a clinical expert like a Kinesiologist, can have significant positive impacts on many common chronic conditions, including helping to mitigate the need for pharmaceuticals. The financial impact of this can be significant considering that, as Benefits Canada found, most plan sponsors underestimate how much of their plan spending goes to caring for chronic conditions. These conditions alone account for 68% of all drug plan spending.

Kinesiologists and drug plans.

The cost of drugs is a major concern for plan sponsors. Of the 79% of them concerned about their plan, their leading concern – at 42% - is the sustainability of their drug plan. For larger employers, their concerns are tied at 39% between drug plan sustainability and the effects of absence and disability on their workforce.

Kinesiologists can help mitigate these challenges. A Kinesiologist can design an exercise program right for a patient's health and abilities, deliver coaching and guidance to keep a client on track with health and wellness goals, reduce or avoid the need for prescription drugs through exercise programming, and help avoid or recover from injuries that lead to lost-time claims. Kinesiology helps make home, work and life activities possible for those struggling with chronic conditions.

Physical activity can be a powerful tool in treating physical and mental health conditions. Kinesiologists, as experts in the science of human movement, are Ontario's regulated experts in delivering exercise-based care. They can act as a vital part of any strong benefits plan.



Exercise Health Professionals improve effectiveness of exercise prescription

Exercise works, and studies demonstrate that supervision makes it all the more effective.

Ontario has an advantage in that respect in that it is the first province in Canada to make Kinesiology a regulated health profession. Kinesiologists, experts in the science of human movement and exercise, provide guidance, coaching and advice that help exercise prescription be more effective.

The effects of supervision can be profound.

Guided exercise can put depression into remission nearly three times faster than simply telling a patient to exercise. Depression also decreases quicker with the help of a professional. This guidance can save lives: In a research study among patients with serious heart conditions, those who completed the program were two and a half times less likely to die after five years than those who did not.

The science is clear when it comes to guided, specialized exercise and mental health. It can improve health outcomes, increase productivity and reduce usage of other, more cost-intensive health benefits. Registered Kinesiologists are the experts at this type of therapy.



Why does it matter to employers that Kinesiologists are regulated in Ontario?

Ontario is the first jurisdiction to regulate Kinesiology, creating high standards and accountability rules that all Kinesiologists must meet and exceed.

Kinesiology has been a regulated profession since 2013. Under the Kinesiology Act, all Kinesiologists must be registered with the College of Kinesiologists of Ontario. This protects the title – ensuring that anyone using it is a trained professional – and guarantees a consistent standard of practice and protection for patients and clients.

Ontario's Requirements

To be a Registered Kinesiologist in Ontario, a Kinesiologist must complete, at the very least, a bachelor's degree in Kinesiology and pass a practice exam. Fourteen Ontario universities offer such programs.

Initial education is supported by a robust requirement for continuing education. The College requires all Kinesiologists to keep their knowledge and skills fresh and current through continuing professional development. They must maintain a professional portfolio, with evidence of their continuing education activities and the practice goals they're striving towards.

Kinesiologists can participate in developing treatment plans

As regulated health professionals in Ontario, Kinesiologists can participate in developing treatment plans for patients and share medical records and consults with other regulated

health professionals to improve the health and wellbeing of their clients/patients.

All Kinesiologists operating in Ontario must continue to meet the College's guidelines: Practice standards, practice guidelines, and adherence to the Code of Ethics. They are accountable to the College in the event issues arise.

Kinesiology and Cardiomyopathy: A Case Study

Exercise-based care, delivered by a Registered Kinesiologist, can have significant positive impacts. The proper course of treatment can be enough to help even Ontarians with serious health conditions re-enter the workforce productively.

Presenting Symptoms:

A 35-year-old patient with low heart function, causing him to suffer shortness of breath and low oxygen levels when he tried to exercise.

Assessment:

The Registered Kinesiologist – a professional with 15 years of experience – completed a full cardiac workup for the patient. It included a stress test, an ECG test, and identifying their physical limits. Through those tests, the Kinesiologist determined a heart rate range to aim for while building an exercise plan.

Treatment:

The patient's goal was to be able to walk a 400-metre track nonstop and without becoming out of breath. The Registered Kinesiologist worked with the young man to achieve the goal with a plan designed to preserve heart function and help delay the need for an assistive device or heart transplant. The exercise program supervised by another Registered Kinesiologist included regular walking, breathing exercises and changing nutrition habits, with adjustments made on a day-to-day basis.

Outcome:

In the end, the patient met his goal of walking the track nonstop. His quality of life improved so much that he was able to go back to work, with higher confidence and self-esteem.

About OKA

Kinesiology is the science of human movement and exercise. From cells to society, Kinesiology uncovers the biomechanical, physiological, neurological, and psychosocial mechanisms that drive human function and performance and applies them to improve health and wellbeing.

The practice of kinesiology is the assessment of human movement and performance and its rehabilitation and management to maintain, rehabilitate or enhance movement and performance. (*Kinesiology Act, 2007. c. 10, Sched. O, s. 3*)

The Ontario Kinesiology Association (OKA) is a non-profit health professional organization with a membership of more than 1,500 registered health professionals. The OKA actively works on behalf of its members to promote Kinesiology as an integral part of Ontario's healthcare and workplace health and safety systems.