

A career in sports physiotherapy

by Heidi Riley

Careers In Sports

It has been a busy summer for **Colin Moore**, who was the head physiotherapist for the **2009 Canada Summer Games**. He recently opened his new **Sports Centre Physiotherapy** clinic and made time for a new baby. He also took on the job of selecting and coordinating the roles of the volunteer physiotherapists, massage therapists and chiropractors tending the athletes at the games.

What is a physiotherapist?

Physiotherapists plan and carry out individualized programs of physical treatment to maintain, improve or restore physical function and reduce pain. Physiotherapists work in a wide range of settings in hospitals or private clinics. They may work with elderly people or with children, with people who have had strokes and other neurological conditions or with people who have had musculoskeletal injuries, or with athletes or others who are recovering from surgery. About 65 physiotherapists are licensed to work on PEI.

“In general, people tend to be less active these days,” says Colin. “They tend to sit more behind computers, which leads to posture issues and discomfort. Weekend warriors who tend to sit in an office chair all day long and then do a lot of activity on the weekends can cause themselves injuries.

“There is so much that physiotherapists can do to help people who have injuries. They offer treatments to decrease pain and increase range of motion, strength, balance, and function.”

Education needed

In Atlantic Canada, a 26-month Master of Science (Physiotherapy) is offered at Dalhousie University. To be accepted, you need a four-year undergraduate degree in a discipline such as neuroscience, psychology, or kinesiology.

Travel and improved study habits

Colin’s road to a physiotherapy career was not always straight or smooth. He graduated from Charlottetown Rural High School and took sciences at UPEI for two years. “I didn’t do very well,” says Colin. “I didn’t have much direction, and I didn’t know what I was going to do. I was fairly young, and mentally I wasn’t very mature.

“I decided to take a year off to travel. It allowed me to see what work was available for someone with my level of education. I had time to mentally grow up and to be able to focus more in school.



Colin Moore is a physiotherapist who specializes in sports injuries.

Before I went away I was barely getting by in school. The year I got back, I made the Dean’s list and was an Academic All Canadian. I made a decision to go to every class, pay attention, and study in advance. Suddenly I found it easy.”

Making a career decision

Colin looked for a career that suited his interests. “I always played sports and enjoyed learning about the body and athletics and exercise, so I looked for a career that combined all those elements,” says Colin.

Next, he did some research. He talked to people in the field and found out what the job was like. “University is an investment of thousands of dollars and three or four years. You should know what you are getting into first.”

Personal experience also played a part. “I played sports, including university-level soccer, and I was always getting myself banged up. While getting treatment, I realized that physiotherapists have an interesting job.”

He talked to the faculty at Dalhousie University to see what courses he needed to get into the physiotherapy program. He also moved from UPEI to Acadia University to make a fresh start.

He took the Physical Education program at Acadia, and then went on to Dalhousie, where he earned a BSc in Physiotherapy. To get experience in sports physiotherapy, he volunteered with a sports physiotherapist at Saint Mary’s University. He also did a fellowship in sports medicine at the University of Western Ontario and earned a Certificate in Sports Physiotherapy.

Sport physiotherapists can travel the world

Colin has traveled across Canada and to Germany, Croatia, Scotland, and Mexico with Canadian figure skating champions and national soccer teams.

Working on PEI

In 1991, he began working at **Sports Centre Physiotherapy** at UPEI. When his employer retired, Colin bought the business. This past spring, the clinic moved to a new and larger location at 153 Belvedere Avenue in Charlottetown.

Employees

The clinic employs four **physiotherapists**, including Colin. The physiotherapists assess patients and determine what treatment is needed. A **massage therapist** is on staff, and two **kinesiologists** help patients with exercises.

Salaries

PEI JobFutures uses the 2006 census to estimate that physiotherapists earn an average of \$54,000 per year. “Salaries are higher for experienced therapists in a hospital setting,” says Colin. “In private practice, it is more common for therapists to be paid by the patient, so it depends on how much they work. Overall, they make similar numbers to the hospital setting.”

Rewards of the job

“I like the variety this job offers,” says Colin. “Everyone who comes to me needs a different treatment plan depending on how active they are. My job involves a lot of talking to people, educating them on their injuries and helping them with manual treatment, modalities and exercises. I enjoy the social aspect.”



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