

Health workforce planning

Policy statement

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World Physiotherapy advocates for appropriate planning, management and development of the health workforce. These are fundamental to the provision of patient/client-centred, equitable and responsive health services. An adequately resourced, competent and motivated workforce is essential to strengthening the health of each nation.(1, 2)

Workforce to population ratios vary widely throughout the countries/territories of World Physiotherapy member organisations.

Determining an ideal physiotherapy workforce to population ratio is complex and depends on several factors including the health system of a country/territory, prevalent health conditions that can benefit from physiotherapy services, and other operational and logistical considerations. Each country/territory has unique factors that impact health workforce planning and estimation and therefore World Physiotherapy does not have one recommendation to be applied universally.

However, large discrepancies in workforce to population ratios between countries/territories is concerning and must be examined for possible education opportunity gaps and lack of prioritization in health service structure and funding.

World Physiotherapy advocates that the following principles should inform effective health workforce planning, management and development and encourages its member organisations to apply them.

- Services should be patient/client centred.
- Services should be based on population priorities and needs assessment.
- Services should be culturally sensitive, competent and responsive.
- Strategies should be sensitive to economic constraints (i.e. sustainable, realistic).
- Strategies should provide integrated services across professions, disciplines and localities.
- Reliable data sources should be used to inform decisions.
- Equitable access should be assured to sustainable high-quality physiotherapy services.
- The scope of practice and services should be clearly defined.
- Professional entry level physiotherapy education should prepare physiotherapists for the needs of the workplace.
- Employed staff should have the relevant competencies to match the requirements of the position.
- Best practice is promoted by having positive practice environments (3, 4) which provide:
 - support for continuing professional development and lifelong learning
 - recruitment and retention strategies
 - terms and conditions of employment
 - support for the growth of professional leaders
 - procedures for risk assessment and risk management
 - policy and monitoring systems to ensure access to accurate data, design, implementation and evaluation of intervention strategies
 - practice environments that are free of intimidation, violence, sexual harassment and bullying

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- appropriate staffing levels (numbers and mix of personnel)
 - policies for physiotherapists practising alone as sole practitioners or in rural, remote or isolated practice environments (5)
 - A sustainable physiotherapy workforce is strengthened and supported by a professional organisation, high standards of professional education and licensure/regulation/recognition consistent with international guidelines. (6-8)
 - The health workforce should be continually evaluated and reviewed.

World Physiotherapy strongly supports the involvement of member organisations in the development of any national health workforce planning, management and development strategies. World Physiotherapy encourages its member organisations to:

- work with national government health departments and regional and national organisations to ensure appropriate short- and long-term sustainable health workforce planning, management and development
- support the World Health Organization's Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel (9)
- identify the issues that inform, and have an impact on, the supply and demand of health personnel within the health services of their country and region
- contribute to national dialogue on the role of physiotherapy in optimising the health of individuals and populations through health promotion, disease prevention, examination/assessment, evaluation, interventions/treatment (including rehabilitation) and re-examination
- contribute to national dialogue on the resource implications for delivering physiotherapy services
- be familiar with the body of research that informs evidence-based health workforce planning, management and development
- ensure that they have access to appropriate data for the planning, management and development of the health workforce in physiotherapy and are able to analyse and use it to inform discussions and decisions
- play a leadership role in discussing the physiotherapy workforce and promoting long-term sustainability of service provision
- capitalise on national policy changes and other opportunities to review services and health workforce models and seek innovation in service provision
- support research efforts in health service and physiotherapy management fields

Glossary (<https://world.physio/resources/glossary>)

Equity

Health workforce

Positive practice environments (PPE)

Approval, review and related policy information	
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Related World Physiotherapy policies:	World Physiotherapy policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethical principles and the responsibilities of physiotherapists and member organisations• Occupational health and safety for physiotherapists• Reciprocity – mutual professional recognition• Regulation of the physiotherapy profession

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