

Patients'/ clients' rights in physiotherapy

Policy statement

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Patients'/clients' rights in physiotherapy

World Physiotherapy advocates for:

- respect of a patient's/client's dignity, integrity and self-determination
- protection of the legal status of the patient/client in connection with the health system and the physiotherapist
- patients'/clients' rights to a relationship based on trust, reliability and confidentiality between them and the physiotherapist

Physiotherapists are subject to the national laws, regulations and professional standards of practice that govern the profession. They should also be aware of relevant international declarations and national laws in areas such as human rights, equal opportunity, racial and gender discrimination, privacy, freedom of information, workplace accidents and injuries.

World Physiotherapy calls on its member organisations to implement the rights set out below.

Patients'/clients' right to quality physiotherapy services

Patients/clients have the right to:

- physiotherapy services provided ethically without discrimination in accordance with the patient's/client's best interests
- services provided by physiotherapists who are free to make clinical and ethical judgments without outside interference
- services provided by physiotherapists who are free to exercise professional judgment according to their education and experience
- request a second opinion from another physiotherapist at any stage
- choose freely and change their physiotherapist or health service institution, whether in the private or public sector
- advocacy, if they are unable to speak on their own behalf

Patients'/clients' right to information

Patients/clients have the right to:

- information upon which to base the decision to provide or withhold consent for examination/assessment and intervention/treatment
- decline examination/assessment and intervention/treatment at any stage, without it prejudicing future management
- receive information about themselves recorded in their health records
- receive information about practice policies, charges for services and intervention plan and their own required commitment and compliance
- choose who, if anyone, should be informed on their behalf
- discuss the physiotherapy intervention/treatment options, benefits, risks and side effects
- receive information in a way that is comprehensible and appropriate to their education, values, and cultural and religious beliefs
- receive information about complaints procedures

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- have any complaint managed sensitively

Patients'/clients' right to informed consent

Patients/clients have the right to provide or withhold informed consent for the type and nature of physiotherapy to be provided. Patients/clients need to participate in decisions about physiotherapy intervention/treatment and make free decisions with knowledge of the consequences of their decisions. (1)

Patients/clients need to know:

- the purpose of any examination/assessment or intervention/treatment
- any risk associated with the proposed intervention/treatment
- the expected benefit of the intervention/treatment
- reasonable alternatives to the proposed intervention/treatment
- the implications of withholding consent

Patients'/clients' right to confidentiality

Patients/clients have the right to confidentiality. Any information related to health status, diagnosis, prognosis, interventions/treatment or any other personal information obtained from them should be kept in confidence unless explicit consent is given or the law specifically states otherwise.

Patients'/clients' right to access to data

Patients/clients have the right to:

- have access to all information relating to them kept by the physiotherapist
- know how and where their physiotherapy data are stored and handled
- have incorrect data corrected or destroyed (2, 3)

Patients'/clients' right to information to inform decision making

Patients/clients have the right to:

- information that empowers them to make informed choices about their personal health, health promotion options, the health services available and the continuity of such health services
- physiotherapy information explained in a way that is appropriate to the needs of the patient/client and their level of knowledge

Patients'/clients' right to dignity

Patients/clients have the right to:

- be treated with dignity in all interactions with a physiotherapist
- be treated courteously
- have their privacy respected at all times in all physiotherapy services
- have their values, culture and religious beliefs respected
- receive humane palliative and end of life care
- die with dignity

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

Equity

Informed consent

Standards of practice

Approval, review and related policy information	
Date adopted:	Originally approved at the 15th General Meeting of WCPT June 2003. Revised to incorporate the Declaration of Principle: Rights of the client (1995) and approved at the 16th General Meeting of WCPT June 2007. Revised and re-approved at the 17th General Meeting of WCPT June 2011. Revised and re-approved at the 18th General Meeting of WCPT May 2015. Revised and re-approved at the 19th General Meeting of WCPT May 2019. Revised and re-approved at the 20 th General Meeting of WCPT May 2023.
Date for review:	2027
Related World Physiotherapy policies:	World Physiotherapy policy statements <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethical principles and the responsibilities of physiotherapists and member organisations• Standards of physiotherapy practice• Quality services• Informed consent• Physiotherapy documentation and records management World Physiotherapy guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guideline for standards of physiotherapy practice• Guideline for physiotherapy documentation and records management World Physiotherapy endorsements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child• The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

References

1. World Physiotherapy. Policy statement: Informed consent London, UK: World Physiotherapy; 2019 [2 Nov 2023]. Available from: <https://world.physio/policy/ps-consent>.
2. physiotherapy W. World Physiotherapy guideline for documentation and records management London, UK: World Physiotherapy; 2023 [2 Nov 2023]. Available from: <https://world.physio/guideline/records-management>.
3. World Physiotherapy. Policy statement: Physiotherapy documentation and records management London, UK: World Physiotherapy; 2023 [2 Nov 2023]. Available from: <https://world.physio/policy/ps-records-management>.

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