

Patients'/clients' rights in physical therapy

Policy statement

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Patients'/clients' rights in physical therapy

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy 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 physical therapist
- patients'/clients' rights to a relationship based on trust, reliability and confidentiality between them and the physical therapist

Physical therapists 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.

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

Patients'/clients' right to quality physical therapy services

Patients/clients have the right to:

- physical therapy services provided ethically without discrimination in accordance with the patient's/client's best interests
- services provided by physical therapists who are free to make clinical and ethical judgments without outside interference
- services provided by physical therapists who are free to exercise professional judgment according to their education and experience
- request a second opinion from another physical therapist at any stage
- choose freely and change their physical therapist 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 physical therapy 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 physical therapy to be provided. Patients/clients need to participate in decisions about physical therapy 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 physical therapist
- know how and where their physical therapy 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
- physical therapy 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 physical therapist
- be treated courteously
- have their privacy respected at all times in all physical therapy services
- have their values, culture and religious beliefs respected
- receive humane palliative and end of life care
- die with dignity

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.
Date for review:	2023
Related WCPT policies:	WCPT ethical principles WCPT policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethical responsibilities of physical therapists and WCPT members• Standards of physical therapy practice• Quality services• Informed consent• Records management: record keeping, storage, retrieval and disposal WCPT guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guideline for standards of physical therapy practice• Guideline for records management: record keeping, storage, retrieval and disposal WCPT 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 Confederation for Physical Therapy. Policy statement: Informed consent. London, UK: WCPT; 2019. www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-consent (Access date 5 September 2019)
2. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. WCPT guideline for records management: record keeping, storage, retrieval and disposal. London, UK: WCPT; 2011. www.wcpt.org/guidelines/records-management (Access date 22 September 2011)
3. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. Policy statement: Records management: record keeping, storage, retrieval and disposal. London, UK: WCPT; 2019. www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-records-management (Access date 3 September 2019)