

# Physical therapy records management: record keeping, storage, retrieval and disposal

Policy statement

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The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) aims to improve the quality of global health service delivery by encouraging high standards of physical therapy education and practice. WCPT recognises the importance and legal requirement for high quality, accurate and comprehensive records. This is an expectation set out in agreed standards for physical therapy practice and viewed as essential for the protection and care of service users. <sup>1</sup>

Records provide valuable information that can be used to:

- show evidence of informed consent
- facilitate clinical decision making
- demonstrate duty of care
- improve services including safety and quality through clear communication of intervention/treatment rationale
- facilitate a consistent approach to collaborative team work, particularly in the context of multidisciplinary records
- ensure continuity of service provision and management between different service providers
- support other activities such as teaching, research, audit, quality assurance programmes and outcomes monitoring
- demonstrate that physical therapists select and provide the highest quality services appropriate for their patients/clients
- provide evidence in the event of litigation
- provide a vital source of statistical and managerial information for the day to day running and future planning of physical therapy and health service provision

WCPT advocates that member organisations should:

- provide support to their members regarding record keeping, storage, retrieval and disposal and in particular the application of national/provincial/state legislation and standards
- ensure professional accountability for the services provided by a physical therapist and for high quality service provision and patient/client management
- ensure that their members implement procedures for the safe storage, retrieval and disposal of all records in all formats (including written, electronic and digital)
- ensure that their members record, store, transmit and dispose of patient/client data taking into consideration the requirements for confidentiality
- ensure that their members are aware that individuals have the right to receive information about themselves recorded in any of their records and that this information should be given in an easily understandable format that is accessible to the individual and sensitive to their needs
- ensure that physical therapist professional entry level education and continuing professional development covers records management
- advise their members of the WCPT guidelines for records management <sup>2</sup>

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[Glossary \(www.world.physio/resources/glossary\)](http://www.world.physio/resources/glossary)

**Duty of care**

**Informed consent**

**Physical therapy record**

**Service standards**

**Standards of care**

<b>Approval, review and related policy information</b>	
<b>Date adopted:</b>	Approved at the 17th General Meeting of WCPT in June 2011. Revised and re-approved at the 18th General Meeting of WCPT in May 2015. Revised and re-approved at the 19th General Meeting of WCPT in May 2019.
<b>Date for review:</b>	2023
<b>Related WCPT policies:</b>	WCPT policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality services</li><li>• Standards of physical therapy practice</li><li>• Relationship with other health professionals</li><li>• Support personnel for physical therapy practice</li><li>• Description of physical therapy</li></ul> WCPT guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Standards of physical therapy practice</li><li>• Records Management: record keeping, storage, retrieval and disposal</li></ul>

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## References

1. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. Policy statement: Standards of physical therapist practice. London, UK: WCPT; 2019. [www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-standards](http://www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-standards) (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](http://www.wcpt.org/guidelines/records-management) (Access date 22 September 2011)

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