

# Autonomy

## Policy statement

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# Autonomy

World Physiotherapy advises that physiotherapists, as autonomous professionals, should have the freedom to exercise their professional judgment and decision making, wherever they practice, within the physiotherapist's knowledge, competence and scope of practice.

Physiotherapists operate as independent practitioners, as well as members of health service provider teams, and are subject to the World Physiotherapy ethical responsibilities and the codes of ethics and best practice in the country in which they practise. They are able to act as first contact practitioners, and patients/clients may seek direct services without referral from another health professional.<sup>1</sup> The services provided by physiotherapists include health promotion, prevention, examination/assessment, evaluation, diagnosis, interventions/treatments and outcomes assessment. The actions of individual physiotherapists are their own responsibility, and their professional decisions cannot be controlled or compromised by employers, members of other professions or other individuals.

In addition to recognising the autonomy of the physiotherapist, World Physiotherapy's description of physiotherapy states that ethical responsibilities require a physiotherapist to recognise the autonomy of the patient/client or legal guardian in seeking his or her services.<sup>(1)</sup>

World Physiotherapy encourages its member organisations to support and work toward:

- assurance that entry level physiotherapy professional education requirements meet the World Physiotherapy education framework recommendations (2)
- recognition by national governments and other professionals of physiotherapists as autonomous professionals (3)
- patients/clients having direct access to physiotherapists and their services through self-referral
- implementation of procedures that support responsible self-governance of physiotherapists (4)

## Autonomy

Approval, review and related policy information	
<b>Date adopted:</b>	Originally adopted at the 13 <sup>th</sup> General Meeting of WCPT June 1995. Revised and re-approved at the 16 <sup>th</sup> General Meeting of WCPT June 2007. Revised and re-approved at the 17 <sup>th</sup> General Meeting of WCPT June 2011. Revised and re-approved at the 18 <sup>th</sup> General Meeting of WCPT May 2015. Revised and re-approved at the 19 <sup>th</sup> General Meeting of WCPT May 2019. Revised and re-approved at the 20 <sup>th</sup> General Meeting of WCPT May 2023.
<b>Date for review:</b>	2027
<b>Related World Physiotherapy policies:</b>	World Physiotherapy policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ethical principles and the responsibilities of physiotherapists and member organisations</li><li>• Direct access and patient/client self-referral/direct access to physiotherapy</li><li>• Relationships with other health professionals</li><li>• Regulation of the physiotherapy profession</li><li>• Reciprocity – mutual recognition</li></ul> World Physiotherapy guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physiotherapist education framework</li><li>• Guideline for the development of a system of license/regulation and recognition of physiotherapists</li></ul>

## References

1. World Physiotherapy. Policy statement: Description of physiotherapy. London, UK 2023 [28 Nov 2023]. Available from: <https://world.physio/policy/ps-descriptionPT>.
2. World Physiotherapy. Physiotherapist education framework. London, UK: World Physiotherapy; 2021 [3 Nov 2023]. Available from: <https://world.physio/what-we-do/education>.
3. World Physiotherapy. Policy statement: Direct access. London, UK: World Physiotherapy; 2019 [28 Nov 2023]. Available from: <https://world.physio/policy/ps-direct-access>.
4. World Physiotherapy. Policy statement: Regulation of the physiotherapy profession London, UK: World Physiotherapy; 2023 [3 Nov 2023]. Available from: <https://world.physio/policy/ps-regulation>.

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