

## Why PTs need to get involved with clinical guidelines

**One of physical therapy's world experts on clinical guidelines is now a leading name in the major international association for guidelines. It's increasingly important that physical therapists – and WCPT – are involved in the field, he tells Simon Crompton.**

Philip van der Wees, Director of the Centre for Evidence Based Physiotherapy in Maastricht, the Netherlands, has been elected a member of the Board of Trustees of the Guidelines International Network (G-I-N), an international not-for-profit association of organisations and individuals involved in clinical practice guidelines. He is also representing WCPT's European Region in G-I-N.

"My objective is to improve the participation of health professionals such as physical therapists and nurses in guideline development," he says. "You tend to find that the process is often quite medically orientated."

Founded in November 2002, G-I-N has grown to 51 member organisations from 26 countries, including the European Region of WCPT and the World Health Organization. It seeks to improve the quality of health care by promoting the systematic development and implementation of clinical practice guidelines, and to do this by supporting international collaboration.

Traditionally, says Philip van der Wees, the guidelines had been put together by doctors, focusing on immediate physical problems. "For a fracture of the ankle, for example, they would look at surgery and other medical treatments. But now we are moving towards looking at rehabilitation and function too. This aspect needs to be stressed more in all the guidelines – they need to look at the full process, from prevention to aftercare and rehabilitation."

With a globally ageing population and growing multi-morbidity, there is a special need for the guidelines to be multi-disciplinary, and to look at function and quality of life, he says. There needs to be a focus on chronic disease management, with input from many professions.

Philip van der Wees has already contributed to much of WCPT's work on clinical guideline development, having jointly written two WCPT Keynotes on the subject and made presentations at various WCPT conferences.

"It's important that the profession keeps up with international developments in this field, and WCPT has a role in this," he says. "We often have to fight for our place to be involved in clinical guidelines. In some countries, it's been pretty good – physiotherapists in the UK, for example, have been involved in guidelines produced by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. But in other countries the profession has no involvement at all. That's why WCPT has produced its Keynote papers, so that the profession has more knowledge in this field, which will help them have more input."

The WCPT Keynotes on clinical guidelines can be found at [www.wcpt.org/node/27527](http://www.wcpt.org/node/27527)