

Evidence Based Practice: An International Perspective Report of an Expert Meeting Organised by WCPT in October 2001

Executive Summary

- The forum of an Expert Meeting on Evidence Based Practice (EBP) provided the ideal opportunity for learning and information sharing in a way which valued diversity and appreciated the different stages of development in different countries in a positive way.
- The three core themes of synthesising, accessing and implementing the evidence gave a good structure to the meeting programme.
- The commitment and enthusiasm of all those who took part were vital to the success of the meeting and needs to be maintained.
- The development of EBP in physical therapy is a goal to which all delegates and their Member Organisations were committed. This should be made explicit in a WCPT Declaration of Principle or Position Statement on EBP.
- A planning group needs to be established to take forward the recommendations for action, to prioritise the work programme and to develop detailed action plans, co-ordinated and managed by WCPT.
- Life long learning was viewed as essential in making EBP a reality and in providing the opportunities for EBP skills acquisition and knowledge transference. This should be formalised within pre and post qualifying education programmes, whilst also recognising the different ways and environments in which learning can take place.
- Significant progress has already been made in developing the initiatives, resources and tools necessary for EBP, such as the PEDro database. International collaboration is seen as vital for the continued development of these, capitalising on the expertise that exists, providing opportunity for others to learn and avoiding inappropriate duplication of effort.
- While advances in information technology (IT) have made it easier to access information worldwide, not all countries have appropriate IT systems and infrastructure in place. Even for those where IT is well advanced access remains a problem for physical therapists, both in terms of physical resources and the skills necessary for EBP.
- Any work undertaken by WCPT needs to explore the potential to produce resources that are easily accessible in a variety of formats and languages. However, the Internet was seen as the leading media for facilitating access to resources in the future and efforts should be made to support those without access to appropriate IT to lobby for this.

- It is important for the physical therapy profession to maintain breadth in its focus on EBP, embracing different perspectives and theories on the generation of evidence and its application, as well as developing methodological debates about the production of 'best evidence'.
- Efforts need to be made to harmonise the language used within physical therapy when referring to EBP related activities to promote common levels of understanding and application. WCPT has a role in facilitating this.
- The establishment of virtual networks could usefully be set up to facilitate international collaboration and debate.
- WCPT Congress 2003, in Barcelona, was seen as another important milestone in furthering the progress made at the Expert Meeting in October 2001, providing a platform to demonstrate the progress made, a further information sharing and learning opportunity and scope for methodological debate.
- Many of the action plans and recommendations set out in this report are not possible for WCPT to deliver alone. Much of the responsibility lies with individual Member Organisations, facilitated and supported by the efforts of WCPT, providing leadership and co-ordination where it is feasible to do so.
- Efforts should be made in developing the action plans to seek opportunities for partnerships and alliances with other organisations and access to external funding sources.