

Physical therapist practice specialisation

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) supports the right of member organisations to make national policies that permit practice specialisation, where such activity is considered by them to benefit the public and the profession by promoting high standards of physical therapy.

WCPT wishes to harmonise and co-ordinate the development of practice specialisation by adopting consistent principles, definitions and guidelines.¹

WCPT advocates that member organisations should encourage and support the following.

- The qualification of a physical therapist specialist includes a formal process for testing and acknowledging the advanced clinical knowledge and skills of the speciality with the expectation that the formal process is fully documented.
- A physical therapist demonstrates advanced clinical competence in their speciality by obtaining formal recognition of his/her knowledge and skills through a member organisation or accredited agent.
- Specialisation is not to be considered, or implied, to mean a limitation on practice. The field of activity recognised as physical therapy will remain open to all appropriately qualified physical therapists, both specialist and non-specialist, practising within their respective levels of competence.

Glossary

Advanced clinical competence — is the demonstration of knowledge and skills beyond those required for entry to the profession.

Physical therapy speciality — is a defined area of physical therapy practice formally recognised by a Member Organisation within which it is possible for a physical therapist to develop and demonstrate higher levels of knowledge and skills.

Specialisation — physical therapist specialisation is the result of advanced knowledge, skills and competence attained by a physical therapist qualified in a specific area, within the scope of practice recognised as physical therapy. This usually results from defined training and educational pathways, associated with a formal process for testing and recognising the advanced level acquired.

Specialist physical therapist — is a physical therapist who has formally demonstrated advanced clinical competence in a defined specialty area within the scope of practice recognised as physical therapy. A specialist physical therapist would be expected to practice and/or teach in the specialty area of clinical practice and also to be involved in evaluation and practice/service development and to contribute to the body of knowledge relevant to their practice setting.

Approval, review and related policy information	
Date adopted:	<p>Originally approved at the 13th General Meeting of WCPT June 1995.</p> <p>Revised and re-approved at the 16th General Meeting of WCPT June 2007.</p> <p>Revised and re-approved at the 17th General Meeting of WCPT June 2011.</p> <p>Revised and re-approved at the 18th General Meeting of WCPT May 2015.</p>
Date for review:	2019
Related WCPT policies:	<p>WCPT policy statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of physical therapy <p>WCPT guideline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guideline for physical therapist practice specialisation

References

1. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. WCPT guideline for physical therapist practice specialisation. London, UK: WCPT; 2017.
http://www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/Guideline_specialisation_complete.pdf (Access date 10th March 2017)

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