

Standards of physical therapist practice

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) recognises the absolute importance of developing and documenting agreed standards for the practice of physical therapy. These standards are necessary to:

- demonstrate to the public that physical therapists are concerned with the quality of the services provided and are willing to implement self-regulatory programmes to maintain that quality
- support entry level physical therapist professional education
- facilitate continuing professional development
- guide practitioners in the conduct and evaluation of their practices
- provide governments, regulatory bodies and other professional groups with background information about the professional practice of physical therapy
- effectively communicate with members of the profession, employers, other health professions, governments and the public

WCPT recognises the diverse social, political and economic environments in which physical therapy is practised throughout the world.

WCPT encourages its member organisations to:

- utilise WCPT's guideline for standards of physical therapy practice as appropriate ¹
- develop specific standards for physical therapy practice if necessary to suit prevailing circumstances or political environment, assuring they are in keeping with WCPT guidelines
- consider the following principles in the process of developing standards:
 - reflect the values, conditions and goals necessary for the continuing advancement of the profession
 - base values on valid principles and make them measurable
 - design standards to help the profession meet the changing needs of the community
 - base standards upon clear definitions of the scope of practice and accountability
 - make standards sufficiently broad and flexible to achieve their objectives and at the same time permit innovation, growth and change
 - subject standards to regular review with revision as required
- set national practice standards in the following areas:
 - administration and practice management
 - community responsibility
 - education
 - informed consent
 - patient/client management

- quality assurance
- support personnel
- communication (eg digital, email, social media, written)
- documentation
- ethical behaviour
- legal
- personal/professional development
- research

Glossary

Scope of practice — is a statement describing physical therapy within the context of the regulatory environment and the evidence base for practice within a jurisdiction. Scopes of practice are dynamic and evolving in accordance with changes in the evidence base, policy and needs of service users. WCPT describes the parameters of a physical therapist's scope of practice in its description of physical therapy and member organisations set out the agreed scope of practice in their countries. ²

1. **Advanced scope of practice** — physical therapists may develop a scope of practice beyond the usual and customary physical therapist's practice as a result of attaining significant additional education, professional experience, and/or enhanced competencies. It may also be referred to as extended scope of practice. Specialisation is an example of advanced scope of practice. ³

Standards of practice — are a collection of documents describing the professional consensus on the practise of physical therapists in any occupational setting. Standards reflect the collective judgement of the profession at a given point in time. ⁴

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 15th General Meeting of WCPT June 2003.</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"> • Quality services <p>WCPT guideline:</p>

- | | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standards of physical therapist practice |
|--|--|
-

References

1. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. WCPT guideline for standards of physical therapy practice. London, UK: WCPT; 2011. www.wcpt.org/guidelines/standards (Access date 22nd September 2011)
2. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. Policy statement: Description of physical therapy. London, UK: WCPT; 2017. www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-descriptionPT (Access date 10th March 2017)
3. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. Policy statement: Physical therapist practice specialisation. London, UK: WCPT; 2017. www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-specialisation (Access date 10th March 2017)
4. Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Quality Assurance Standards for physiotherapy service delivery. London, UK.: CSP; 2012. <http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/quality-assurance-standards> (Access date 3rd October 2016)

© World Confederation for Physical Therapy 2017