



Policy statement

Evidence based practice

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) believes that physical therapists have a responsibility to use evidence to inform practice and ensure that the management of patients/clients, carers and communities is based on the best available evidence. They also have a responsibility not to use techniques and technologies that have been shown to be ineffective or unsafe.

Evidence should be integrated with clinical experience, taking into consideration beliefs, values and the cultural context of the local environment, as well as patient/client preferences.

Evidence based practice (EBP) is more easily achievable in environments that embrace and promote it.

WCPT encourages its member organisations to:

- work with managers and organisations to provide appropriate support structures, resources, facilities and learning opportunities to ensure the delivery of the highest quality of physical therapy services possible
- ensure that physical therapists are able to evaluate practice critically, including being able to identify questions arising in practice, accessing and critically appraising the best evidence, and implementing and evaluating the outcomes of their actions
- facilitate the provision of relevant life-long learning activities that are fundamental to evidence based physical therapy practice, which should be introduced in entry-level physical therapy education programmes and should extend through continuing professional development opportunities¹⁻²
- promote collaboration within the profession and with other professions or disciplines at local, national and international levels to facilitate information generation, sharing and implementation
- develop partnerships and collaborations on projects relevant to EBP
- call on national governments and non-governmental organisations to facilitate and promote evidence based health services (eg through providing appropriate resources such as computers, internet access, on-line databases, libraries, and training in EBP skills)

Glossary

Evidence based practice (EBP) — is an approach to health care wherein health professionals use the best available evidence from systematic research, integrating it with clinical expertise to make clinical decisions for individual patients. EBP values, enhances and builds on clinical expertise, knowledge of disease mechanisms, and pathophysiology. It involves complex and conscientious decision-making based not only on the available evidence but also on patient characteristics, situations, and preferences. It recognises that health care is individualised and ever changing and involves uncertainties and probabilities.³

Approval, review and related policy information	
Date adopted:	Approved at the 15th General Meeting of WCPT June 2003. Revised and re-approved at the 16th General Meeting of WCPT June 2007. Revised and re-approved at the 17th General Meeting of WCPT June 2011.
Date for review:	2015
Related WCPT policies:	WCPT policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Ethical responsibilities of physical therapists and WCPT members • Research • Standards of physical therapy practice

References

1. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. WCPT guideline for physical therapist professional entry level education. London, UK: WCPT; 2011. www.wcpt.org/guidelines/entry-level-education (Access date 22nd September 2011)
2. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. Policy statement: Education. London, UK: WCPT; 2011. www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-education (Access date 22nd September 2011)
3. McKibbin KA. Evidence based practice. Bulletin of the Medical Library Association 1998; 86:3;396-401