Policy statement

Physical therapist practice specialisation

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) supports the right of member organisations to make national policies which permit practice specialisation, where such activity is considered by them to benefit the public and the profession by promoting higher 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 will include a formal process for testing and acknowledging the advanced clinical knowledge and skills of the speciality. It is expected that the formal process will be fully documented.

- A physical therapist can demonstrate 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 basic professional practice.

Specialisation — is the application of advanced clinical competence by a physical therapist qualified in a defined area within the scope of practice recognised as physical therapy.

Specialist physical therapist — is a physical therapist who has formally demonstrated an ability to apply advanced clinical competence in a defined clinical area, within the scope of practice recognised as physical therapy. A specialist physical therapist will work primarily in a specific area of clinical and/or teaching practice, but would be expected to also be involved in research and evaluation and practice/service development relevant to their practice setting.

Physical therapy speciality — is a prescribed 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.

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<th>Approval, review and related policy information</th>
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| **Date adopted:** | Originally approved at the 13th General Meeting of WCPT June 1995.  
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 statement:  
• Description of physical therapy  
WCPT guideline:  
• Guideline for physical therapist practice specialisation |

References