

Research

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) advocates the generation and dissemination of physical therapy research evidence is essential for the practice of evidence-based physical therapy.

WCPT encourages member organisations to:

- advocate for their members engaged in research to conduct research in accordance with internationally recognised ethical principles and guidelines ¹⁻⁶
- ensure that research is carried out with the approval of a local/national research ethics review committee
 - assemble a properly constituted ethics review committee where there is no such review body, or lobby for another body to do so
- promote quality processes in the conduct of research activities, including:
 - adherence to ethical standards
 - appropriate management and monitoring
 - accountability (including financial and reporting)
 - confidentiality of participant's data
 - duty of care for research participants
 - identification and protection of intellectual property arising from the research
 - ensuring the integrity of the results
 - reporting of adverse incidents
 - reporting results of the research endeavour, both positive and negative
 - following guidelines supporting ethical authorship practices ^{7,8}
- support and promote collaboration in research endeavours at a local, national and/or international level with all those who can make a valuable contribution with respect to the initial concept, design, planning, execution, analysis, discussion and dissemination:
 - within the profession
 - with other professions or disciplines
 - with service users and providers
- raise awareness among their members of their responsibilities to record research projects on appropriate research databases, for example clinical trial registries, and reporting according to guidelines
- make their members aware of their responsibility to share freely the results of such research through a range of dissemination routes including databases, publication in appropriate professional journals, conference presentations, electronic media and the national press
- urge their members to follow research guidelines and standards that support the integrity and quality of research reporting ⁷⁻⁹
- advocate for open access initiatives supporting the dissemination of research

- recognise the role and responsibility that national associations have in promoting the evidence to support the practice of physical therapists

WCPT believes that physical therapy research should encompass all domains that impact on physical therapy.¹ Further, that the profession draws on relevant methodological approaches² that are accepted in the literature and appropriate to the design research questions under investigations, and is open to exploring innovation in research practice.

While not all physical therapists are expected to be active researchers, it is a professional responsibility for all physical therapists to use research findings and the best available evidence to inform their practice. This is supported by WCPT's policy statement on evidence-based practice.¹⁰ Physical therapists should also recognise the opportunities for informing research through the routine collection of reliable practice-based data gathered in the course of every day practice.

Glossary

Duty of care — is a legal obligation to always act in the best interest of patients/clients/populations and to protect them from unnecessary risk of harm by not acting or failing to act in a way that results in harm.¹¹⁻¹³ The legal expectation is that the physical therapist will provide services consistent with their level of training, skill and competence.

Evidence-based practice (EBP) — is an approach to practice wherein health professionals use the best available evidence from systematic research, integrating it with clinical expertise to make clinical decisions for service users, who may be individual patients/clients, carers and communities/populations. 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 best available evidence but also on patient/client characteristics, situations, and preferences. It recognises that health services are individualised and ever changing and involves uncertainties and probabilities.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

Research ethics — involves the application of fundamental ethical principles to a variety of topics involving scientific research. These include the design and implementation of research involving human and animal experimentation, various aspects of academic scientific misconduct (such as fraud and plagiarism), whistle blowing; regulation of research, etc. Research ethics is most developed as a concept in health sciences research. The key agreements in relation to human research are the Declaration of Helsinki 1964 as updated most recently in 2013 and the International Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects.^{4, 6}

¹ This includes but is not limited to: basic sciences; examination, diagnosis, prognosis/plan, and interventions/treatment; technological advances; theory development; service delivery and organisation of service delivery models/systems; economic analyses (eg cost effectiveness studies); implementation sciences; educational approaches; health and social care policy; patient/client perspectives; effectiveness of interprofessional practice; multimodal interventions.

² Examples of methodological approaches include, but are not limited to: meta-analysis, experimental, quasi-experimental, descriptive/quantitative, qualitative.

Approval, review and related policy information	
Date adopted:	<p>Approved at the 15th General Meeting of WCPT, June 2003 (replaced Declaration of Principle: Validation of practice techniques and technologies).</p> <p>Edited 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 statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Evidence based practice • Informed consent

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