

232: **CROSSING EUROPEAN BOUNDARIES: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGREED STANDARDS OF PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE**

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**Objective:**

To investigate and test the acceptability of common measurable standards of physiotherapy practice for the European Region of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy.

**Methods:**

A project team was appointed by the Executive Committee of the European Region of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) in November 2000. The team comprised members from physiotherapy associations in Ireland, Lebanon, Netherlands, Norway and UK. The team reviewed the practice standards published in English from Australia, Canada, UK and USA physiotherapy associations. The team independently assessed and subjectively judged these for clarity and usability in their respective countries. The team arrived at consensus that the standards produced by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy in the UK (CSP, 2000) met these 2 criteria best. The CSP gave permission to use their standards. The content was revised to remove UK specific terminology and references, and amended when the meaning of words was lost in translation. The draft standards document was piloted with 5 physiotherapy associations in the European Region of WCPT. Each was asked to read the document and answer a questionnaire addressing acceptability, usability and comprehension. The draft standards of physiotherapy practice were then circulated to all 35 physiotherapy associations in the European Region of WCPT in April 2001. A short questionnaire asked professional associations to provide answers to specific questions on clarity of language, content and identification of areas to be further clarified. A reminder letter was sent to all non-respondents in July 2001. On receipt of the returned questionnaires, the team considered requests for clarification and examples and changed the document accordingly.

**Results:**

The pilot obtained a 100% response rate. All 5 countries reported that they "understood what was being proposed", found the document "acceptable" and "usable". No respondents identified the document as being problematic or requiring further explanation. One respondent reported that the standard relating to the existence of a Professional Development Portfolio might not be applicable to all professional associations at the present time.

At the initial response date of June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2001 a 41% response rate had been achieved. The final number of returns was 27 out of 35 professional associations originally circulated. A response rate of 77%. There were no negative comments. The comments that were received were for clarification of terminology and some requests for examples. 41% of respondents reported that they found the document to be clear and not requiring further clarification. 6% of respondents expressed a wish to have the standards adopted as soon as possible. 20% of respondents requested a change in terminology from physical therapy to physiotherapy.

**Conclusions:**

- It was possible to reach consensus on the value and format of standards of practice for physiotherapy that could be adopted across the European region to improve patient care.
- The Standards of Physiotherapy Practice have been forwarded for formal ratification at the General meeting of the European Region of WCPT in May 2002.
- The process adopted for the production of common standards for physiotherapy practice could be considered by other healthcare professions in Europe.