

*D*escriptions
of
Professional
Requirements
for
Physiotherapists



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Foreword

The superintending authority for the Swedish corps of physiotherapists is the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), whose responsibility it is to act as quality guarantor and to ensure safety in health and medical care and guard against the risk of injury to patients.

In order to carry out their duties in the various specialist fields of health and medical care, physiotherapists need a comprehensive but easy-to-grasp description of professional skills. With the patient's needs in each specialist field as the point of departure, the physiotherapist's work must rest on a uniform scientific basis, irrespective of where in the country this work is performed.

To complement its general guidelines regarding requirements for the undertaking of professional duties by physiotherapists, the Board has also promulgated descriptions of qualifications, for registered physiotherapists and for physiotherapists working within certain specialist fields. These descriptions, whose purpose it is to establish what basic professional skills within the different fields of activity the Board requires of physiotherapists, constitute an instrument with which the Board exercises its authority regarding supervision, follow-up and evaluation. They ought therefore to be used as a guide by employers and by physiotherapists themselves as well as in the planning of courses within higher education.

The descriptions of competence have been elaborated within the framework of a project led by Estrid Gullström. The basic material was produced with the assistance of knowledgeable, registered physiotherapists seconded by their respective sections of the Swedish Association of Registered Physiotherapists. A reference group, set up to monitor the project's operation, included representatives of the Federation of County Councils, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, the Swedish Association of Registered Physiotherapists and the Swedish Medical Association as well as representatives of the various units on the Board. Opinions put forward during the round of referral have been incorporated into the material.

A comprehensive material of this nature may well need revising when the experience gained during its application can be analysed. Proposals for alterations and additions should be sent to the Health and Medical Section of the National Board of Health and Welfare, S-106 30 Stockholm.

The registered physiotherapist¹⁾

Professional field and duties

The professional physiotherapist's work concerns a wide spectrum of patient categories, ranging from infants and children, to adolescents, adults and also the elderly, regarding common health problems and physical handicaps that limit – or threaten to limit – patients' functional abilities. The objectives of physiotherapy, whether carried out in an institution or as outpatient care, are prevention, treatment and/or rehabilitation.

In Sweden, the Health & Medical Services Act (*Hälso- och Sjukvårdslagen*), which guarantees patients with functional handicaps the right to care and assistance, and also the Act on Professional Activities Within the Health Care System (*Yrkesverksamhetslagen*)²⁾, are the two laws that govern the physiotherapist's work. On the basis of these Acts, qualified physiotherapists are expected, in a spirit of ethical professionalism and acting in accordance with scientific knowledge and proven experience within their field of professional competence, to be able

- to assume responsibility for assessing physiotherapeutic needs, to determine the objectives of physiotherapeutic treatment and associated care, and to make a critical appraisal of their own performance and the overall management of a wide range of patients,
- to initiate and carry out preventive and health-promoting measures,
- to undertake physiotherapeutic and rehabilitative treatment and subsequently modify the treatment plan,
- to test and prescribe medicotechnical products for use as aids and to apply such medico-technical appliances as comprise the physiotherapist's equipment, as well as being responsible for ensuring their safe use,
- to inform, instruct and supervise patients and their near relatives or

¹⁾ The physiotherapist's professional authorization is proof of successfully completed basic training and the passing of the necessary qualifying examination.

²⁾ Act (1998:531) concerning professional duties within the field of health and medical care.

- personal attendants and also other medical staff,
- to inform themselves about, apply and participate in relevant research and development work and to base a planning decision on evidence-based practice,
- to plan their own work, participate in group work, lead subordinate staff and collaborate with representatives of other professions, patients' relatives, interest groups and public institutions,
- to maintain a cost-effective attitude to all physiotherapeutic work,
- to undertake professional physiotherapeutic duties at the scene of any serious accident or natural disaster, whether during peacetime or even in the event of hostilities.

Physiotherapists must in the course of their professional duties comply with the appropriate statutes and be capable of observing the rules and regulations pertaining.

Duties

This section elaborates on the preceding section, Professional Field and Duties, which set out the framework for the professional requirements of physiotherapists. It describes the tasks and the practical knowledge associated with the various duties.

Therapeutic assessment, objectives, evaluation and follow-up

Proceeding from a holistic view of each patient's health and life situation, personality and individual prospects, a physiotherapist must be able

- to formulate a case history, particularly recording any departure from the normal condition, as well as paying regard to the patient's own experiences and of relatives' feelings about the patient's predicament,
- by using approved and reliable investigatory methods and measures, to determine a patient's locomotory and functional abilities, body image and experience of pain; to assess the patient's needs; and also, if necessary, to obtain a second medical opinion,
- to conduct a pain assessment,
- to determine what health-promoting physiotherapeutic measures are necessary, whether of a preventive and remedial or of a therapeutic and rehabilitational nature,
- in accordance with a request/query from a patient, his/her close relatives, or in consultation with other professionals or health unit, assess the patient's need of physiotherapeutic measures,

- in consultation with a patient and/or close relative and in collaboration with medical staff or carers, determine the ultimate objective of treatment and what steps to take, as well as to prepare a schedule for physiotherapeutic treatment and other requirements, including the supplying and fitting of appliances,
- to maintain continuous documentation of physiotherapeutic interventions already undertaken,
- by using approved and reliable methods, to evaluate and, if necessary, modify concluded or ongoing physiotherapeutic interventions and to monitor these.

Preventive measures

By studying a patient's own environment and way of life, personality and individual abilities, a physiotherapist must by individually oriented work within her/his occupational field, be able

- to advise patients and close relatives how functional abilities can be improved,
- to encourage and help patients to adapt their customary physical exercise patterns and/or way of life, when such changes are called for,
- to suggest health-promoting and prophylactic measures, or refer patients to other forms of activity, for example associations and club activities.

Physiotherapeutic treatment and rehabilitative measures

For the purpose of improving or maintaining existing capabilities and to compensate for defects in locomotory preconditions, capacity and behaviour, or any other handicap that can impair a patient's health, a physiotherapist must, within her/his field of work, be able

- as a prelude to therapy or other treatment, to inform patients and close relatives regarding intended measures and their purpose,
- to give physiotherapy, including appropriate pain relief and remedial treatment, using approved and reliable physiotherapeutic methods, so that the patient can retain or improve his/her locomotory capacity and behaviour or compensate for impaired powers/behaviour regarding abilities of daily life (ADL), social intercourse, work, education and recreation,
- to treat groups of patients sharing similar problems by leading appropriate group training,
- to stimulate the joy of movement and develop patients' bodily rhythms, powers of coordination, balance, etc., with or without the

- help of music and rhythm,
- as behoves all categories of medical staff, to give first-aid in the event of, e.g., heart attack or apnea,
- to collaborate with other rehabilitation staff,
- to use appropriate procedures for reporting between links in the health and medical care chain.

Medicotechnical products – appliances and equipment

In accordance with her/his professional competence, a physiotherapist must be able

- to prescribe, fit and test medicotechnical products as aids, ensure that such products are appropriate and that patients are capable of using the item(s) in a correct, approved manner,
- to use medicotechnical products for examination, treatment, or other intervention in a manner that does not expose the patient to risk,
- to take appropriate steps to limit the extent of any injury, for example in case of an accident attributable to the use of a medicotechnical product,
- to check the functioning of such medicotechnical products both before and after use, to the extent required, e.g. according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Information, teaching and supervision

Within her/his field of professional duties, a physiotherapist must be able

- to identify patients' need of information in order to undertake their own training and self-care, and to assess how that need shall be satisfied,
- to instruct, teach and supervise patients and/or their close relatives and to ensure that they have understood that information and can act accordingly,
- to inform and teach other categories of staff and students undergoing other forms of professional training concerning self-care, coping strategies/adaptation to changed life situations,
- to supervise other staff categories and students undergoing other forms of professional training.

Research and development

Within her/his field of professional duties, a physiotherapist must be able

- in daily routine, to apply relevant knowledge and experience derived from research and development,
- to collaborate in research and development work.

Planning and management duties

Within her/his field of professional duties, a physiotherapist must be able

- to plan, participate in group work, lead subordinate staff and collaborate with representatives of other professions and public institutions,
- to identify risks in the health care environment and, when necessary, take steps to ensure the safety of patients in that environment,
- to participate in continuous, systematic and documented quality assurance work.

Resource husbandry

Within her/his field of professional duties, a physiotherapist must be able

- to work in a cost-effective manner,
- to work in such a way that available resources (staff, premises, apparatus and technical aids) are used in an appropriate manner,
- to work in such a way that patients will not become dependent on care provision.

Emergency preparedness

Within her/his field of professional duties, a physiotherapist must be able

- in the case of a serious accident or catastrophe, to collaborate with the relevant special organization whose task it is to deal with such incidents,
- to adapt her/his work to the particular circumstances prevailing in the event of a catastrophe, crisis or hostilities.

Report of The National Board of Health and Welfare 1999:1

Certain patients require physiotherapeutic treatment or assistance which presupposes that a registered physiotherapist is qualified to work in that particular specialist field. The Board's general guidelines regarding qualifications for employment as a physiotherapist (SOSFS 1998:14) identify the following six patient categories:

- children and young people with physical disabilities or diseases
- older persons with physical or mental disabilities
- persons with a mental disturbance or psychosomatic ailment, and patients of all ages having physical disabilities in consequence of complicated diseases and/or injuries to:
 - the locomotory system
 - the nervous system
 - the respiratory organs or circulatory system.

Using each of these patient categories as its point of departure, the Board sets out in this report, *Descriptions of Professional Requirements for Physiotherapists*, what basic professional skills and knowledge the Board considers that physiotherapists need in order to carry out their duties. The Board uses the term Professional Requirements in its work as the superintending, monitoring and evaluating authority. Accordingly, this document ought also to serve as a guide to employers, for physiotherapists themselves, and in the planning of training courses within higher education.

SoS Report (*SoS-rapport*) is the overriding designation for the Board's series of publications of an informatory nature.

The series deals with subjects pertaining to all fields of activity within the Board's purview, such as final reports from investigatory commissions, proposals from working committees, inventories of knowledge and skills, conference reports, referral papers and many other forms of publication.

The publications are intended chiefly for civil servants and elected representatives on county councils, and in county administrations and local authorities; for health and medical staff, staff engaged in health protection and the social services; for students, and, to a lesser extent, also for the general public.



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