

The Nordic Touch



Physical Therapy:

INVESTING IN HEALTH



The Nordic touch ... in a global profession

Dear colleagues!

In this brochure, we offer you some concise examples of current physiotherapy themes and perspectives in the Nordic countries. Some of them arguably show a degree of “Nordicness”, while others are widely shared among physical therapists and their associations across the world. We hope you will find this an interesting and easy-to-read mix.

Hoping that many exciting new contacts will be made in Amsterdam, the Nordic physiotherapist associations wish you all a successful World Physical Therapy 2011 conference!





DENMARK



Charlotte Hyttel is a 32-year-old schoolteacher. A scanning showed that she had two herniated discs. She was given the choice of surgery or exercise – and chose exercise. "I have never regretted it."

Physical exercise as therapy instead of surgery

Each year some 11,000 persons in Denmark have surgery for back pain conditions and the number of back surgery procedures increases year by year. However, international studies show that many surgery procedures can be prevented or postponed by offering the patients physical exercise therapy as part of an active, multi-disciplinary intervention.

Half of the Danes with a lumbar herniated disc may benefit more from physical exercise than from surgery. Furthermore, calculations made by the Association of Danish Physiotherapists (Danske Fysioterapeuter) show that the patient will experience fewer adverse reactions and that society will save millions.

In January 2011, the Danish government decided to introduce new professional guidelines directing hospitals to offer the patients an active, multi-disciplinary therapy before offering surgery to them.

Active, multi-disciplinary therapy may be used instead of surgery also in many other musculoskeletal areas. In 2005, 662,000 persons in Denmark had at least six months' musculoskeletal pain.

The increased interest in active, multi-disciplinary therapy allows physiotherapists to give patients a better therapy, and physiotherapy competencies get a more prominent position in healthcare.

Everyday rehabilitation

The more self-reliant a citizen is, the less care she will need. This is the principle of the everyday rehabilitation introduced by many municipalities in Denmark. The idea is to combine care and practical assistance with ADL and physical exercise so that citizens released from hospital or who have previously received practical assistance will be able to carry out various everyday activities, such as getting dressed, vacuum-cleaning and taking a bath.

The citizen becomes more self-reliant, improves her quality of life and society saves money. The active therapeutic mindset thus helps meet the challenge of a growing number of elderly citizens, a reduced labour force and increasing healthcare costs.

Physiotherapists must, among other things, assess the citizen's needs, refer to everyday rehabilitation and supervise home helpers and other caregivers in activating the citizen in her own home and training her to cope with everyday activities.

Fredericia was the first municipality in Denmark to organise everyday rehabilitation in 2007. Since then, the idea has spread to most of Denmark's 98 municipalities, which in the next few years plan to introduce everyday rehabilitation.

Everyday rehabilitation poses new professional challenges to physiotherapists as well as options of carrying out new jobs and taking on new responsibilities.

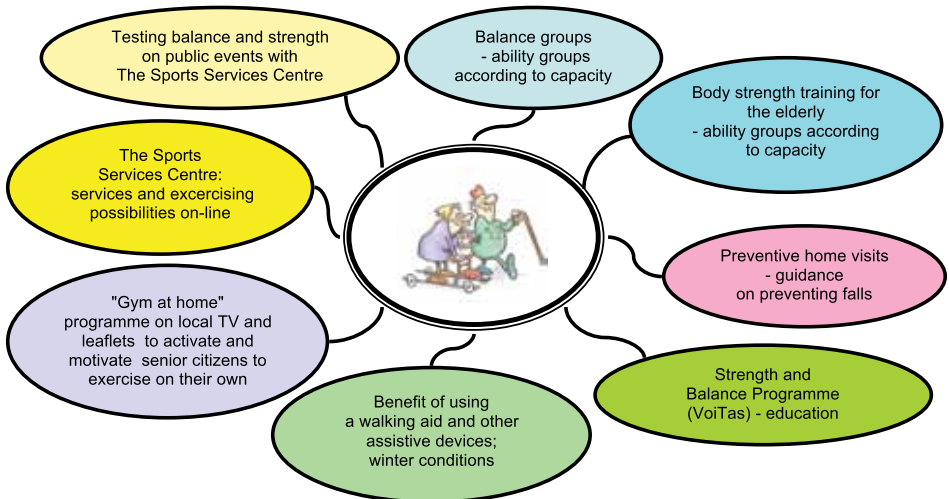
For more information

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Model of preventing falls among senior citizens

In our model for preventing falls among senior citizens, the principles are evidence-based therapy and networking. The model enables us to use the professional skills of physical therapists in a variety of ways. Senior citizens have considered this activity important. Using TV programmes and testing events, we reach out to senior citizens of different abilities and capacities and motivate them to exercise.



www.turku.fi » turku.fi » Health » Rehabilitation » Physical Therapy

Physiotherapist's lower back reception

Perusturvalliikelaitos Saarikka, an intermunicipal basic security and health service, has had a physiotherapist's lower back reception since 2006. The reception was set up in order to ensure the availability of services to clients owing to a shortage of doctors. Cost-effectiveness and client satisfaction were sought by means of physiotherapy expertise and a treatment regimen encouraging activity.

Personnel at the emergency reception have an assessment list that they use to select clients suitable for the physiotherapist's lower back reception. If red flags disqualifying the client surface in the assessment, the client is referred to a doctor.

At the lower back reception, the physiotherapist performs a physical therapy examination and guides the client in self-care for back pain. The physiotherapist has the right to prescribe sick leave of one to five days and the right to recommend analgesic medication. As needed, an appointment is made for a follow-up visit to the physical fitness guidance centre or a telephone consultation. Physiotherapists have the possibility to consult a doctor about, among other things, medication and obtaining a referral for private-sector physiotherapy.

The physiotherapist providing physical therapy at the lower back reception has several years of professional experience and at least 30 credits of additional study in examination and therapeutic exercise of the lower back. A questionnaire carried out among lower back reception clients in 2010 found that clients experienced the service they had received as skilful and quite beneficial or very beneficial to their well-being. The positive feedback received on the client questionnaire should encourage further development and expansion of physiotherapy receptions.



Photo: Tiina Lahtinen-Suopanki.

For further information on the above topics, send an email to **toimisto@suomenfysioterapeutit.fi**.



ICELAND

Walking bus

The walking bus is a concept designed to encourage children to walk to school, helping them to keep fit and benefiting the environment by reducing the use of cars. The walking bus is a simple idea which any parent, teacher or interested party can put into practice. The basic idea is that a group of children walk to school together with accompanying adults to ensure their safety. This is an opportunity for fresh air, exercise and a chat with friends, reducing the number of vehicles at the school gates which pose a safety and environmental problem. There is clear evidence that children who are encouraged to walk to school are more likely to make it a habit in the future.

The project has been set up in two schools as a trial led by the Icelandic Physical Therapy Association. The idea is to present it to elementary schools around the country. An instructional webpage has been set up for participants to get information on how to set up the program.



Two kinds of walking bus have been tried out. The first is simply parents walking their children to school in a group. This is the easiest set-up, as all you need to do is arrange for a small group to meet at a certain place and time and walk to school.

The alternative walking bus is a volunteerled bus with volunteers from within the community to accompany the children, e.g. senior citizens.

Balanced

is a short educational film about balance and balance training, published by the Icelandic Physical Therapy Association. The film covers the control of posture and changes in maintaining balance that can occur in connection with increasing age, diseases or accidents. The film is being marketed for health care professionals working with such patients, i.e. people with balance prob-

lems, as well as group exercise instructors working with the elderly.

Video clips from the film with education regarding balance problems are being produced for the national television in Iceland and will be published for the Icelandic population, e.g. what factors contribute to balance, how to regain balance and how to prevent falls.



“Use the benches”

The Icelandic Physical Therapy Association, in collaboration with senior citizens’ organizations around the country, is organizing marked paths with benches every 200–300 meters. This is designed to encourage elderly people to go out and walk more and at the same time stay healthier, more independent and able to live at home for a longer period of time. There is clear evidence that one of the biggest barriers preventing the elderly going out for a walk is the distance between resting areas (e.g. benches).



For further information on any of the above topics, go to www.physio.is or send us an email at physio@physio.is.



NORWAY



Healthy Lifestyle Centres

In Norway, health promotion and disease prevention is a key element in recent government proposals for healthcare legislation and reform. Healthy lifestyle centres have become essential in helping adults change their lifestyle to prevent disease and reduce health problems in society. Physical therapists are key personnel at these centres.

Municipal healthy lifestyle centres offer guidance and follow-up expertise in health behaviour changes relating to physical activity, diet and tobacco use. The goal of all centre activities is elimination or reduction of health risks in adults through permanent changes in behaviour.

Typically, a physical therapist is the centre's manager and/or in charge of the physical activity programmes, using his or her special knowledge about the body and movement in prescribing specific programmes tailored to individuals' needs.

Local councils in Norway are increasingly aware of the benefits of disease prevention and health promotion. From 2010 to February 2011, the number of municipal healthy lifestyle centres rose from 70 to more than 100. The centres have been characterized by the Minister of Health as an "investment in the quality of life of many people and a fine investment from a social economic perspective".

Worth checking out during World Physical Therapy 2011:

The short documentary "Healthy Lifestyle Centres: a Physical Therapy Approach" (with English subtitles) will be shown at regular intervals at the Nordic stand.

Fall Prevention among Elderly People: Investing in Independence

An ageing population makes sustained prevention efforts the only option for controlling the increasing costs of surgery, intensive care and nursing homes. Fall prevention is a cost-efficient way of reducing the incidence of fractures and consequent medical complications, making it possible for many elderly people to continue living independently and securely in their own homes.

Norwegian research* suggests that fall prevention could bring considerable economic as well as health and quality of life benefits. The cost of implementing a fall-prevention programme could be just 54 % of the amount saved through reduced healthcare costs for treating fall-related injuries .



In Norway, more than one in three above the age of 67 experience one or more falls per year. Between 40 and 60 per cent of such falls result in injuries that require medical attention.

Fall prevention programmes aim at reducing risk factors and improving elderly people's strength and balance. In Norway, there are many local programmes with physical therapists as key personnel, but nationwide implementation of fall prevention programmes is still lacking.

Fall prevention among the elderly should be given top priority in primary healthcare. Physical therapists should assure the quality of a national programme and be instrumental in implementing it locally in a fashion that brings out all the health, quality of life and cost-effectiveness benefits of having elderly people live securely and independently in their own homes as long as possible.

* Liv F. Hektoen et al (2009): "Cost-effectiveness in fall prevention for older women", *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 37: 584–589.



SWEDEN

Treatment of osteoarthritis: Physical activity on prescription

In Sweden, a method has been developed for the purpose of systematically enhancing physical activity in the prevention and treatment of disease, called Physical activity on prescription.

This work is the result of cooperation between many healthcare professions. A handbook, now also available in English, has been produced to guide professionals in the choice of prescriptions. The handbook summarizes the up-to-date scientific knowledge on how to prevent and treat various diseases and conditions on which physical activity has a documented effect.

The handbook is also used in research as well as a textbook in courses for doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and other healthcare workers.

Physical activity in the prevention and treatment of disease includes a general part and a specific part that covers 32 health conditions.

The table gives a summary of how training should be prescribed in osteoarthritis.



Type of training	Intensity	Frequency (times/week)	Duration (min./session)
Aerobic fitness training	Moderate (13 on the Borg RPE scale)	≥ 3	30 in total (e.g. 3 x 10 min.)
Strength training	1–3 sets of 8–10 exercises with 8–12 repetitions/set, successively increasing load	3	20–60

The picture illustrates the balance between recommended interventions in osteoarthritis and shows that all people with osteoarthritis will benefit from physical activity and training. Some need additional medication and a few will need surgery.

The handbook:

http://www.svenskidrottsmedicin.se/fyss/fyss_2010_english.pdf

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