

Definitions and competencies for Direct Access

Physiotherapist's scope of practice — “is a statement describing physical therapy within the context of the regulatory environment and evidence base for practice within a jurisdiction. Scopes of practice are dynamic, evolving with changes in the evidence base, policy and needs of service users. WCPT sets out the internationally agreed scope of practice and member organizations set out the scope of practice agreed in their countries” (<http://www.wcpt.org/node/47985>).

Direct access is related to a Physiotherapist's autonomous practice when the Physiotherapist is a first contact practitioner and can treat patients without a referral from a medical practitioner.

The entry-level curriculum prepares the physiotherapy students to see the patients, mostly with muscle skeletal disorders, without a referral as soon as they graduate. In the direct access workplace the new graduate Physiotherapist needs to have access to a supporting mentor.

In each country Physiotherapists must be aware, follow and apply the profession's ethical principles and the national regulations and laws that affect and regulate physiotherapy practice in that country.

Physiotherapists need to fulfil the competences stated in ENPHE's recommendations for physiotherapist (http://enphe.org/Portals/enphe/ESCO_report_ENPHE_recommendations_April_2017.pdf).

Specific competences including knowledge base and skills for direct access

Physiotherapists must:

- follow the principles of International Classification of Function (ICF),
- base their practice on evidence, best practices and guidelines,
- be able to establish a physiotherapy diagnosis (<http://www.wcpt.org/node/47867>),
- be able to demonstrate clinical reasoning skills and reflective practice,
- be aware of potential dangerous pathologies,
- have appropriate decision making skills to recognise when they have the capability to treat the patient and when they need to refer the patient to a medical doctor or other healthcare professional,
- actively maintain his/her continuous professional development.