

International Organisation of Physical Therapists in Paediatrics (IOPTP)
Statement on
Paediatric Essential and Recommended Content Areas in
Entry Level Professional Physical Therapy Education

INTRODUCTION

The IOPTP acknowledges that the paediatric content in physical therapist professional entry level educational programs varies worldwide and that for some countries, mechanisms already exist to provide extensive paediatric content. However, this is not universal. The IOPTP anticipates that different countries will use this curriculum guide to varying extents dependent on their needs. While some aspects of this guideline may already be implemented, other aspects may include elements to which countries are striving to fulfill.

In 2011, the WCPT developed “Guidelines for physical therapist professional entry level educational programs”¹. The identification of the paediatric essential content areas by the IOPTP was developed to expand the description of the paediatric content that should be incorporated in professional entry-level educational programs. The IOPTP guideline and the WCPT guideline may provide guidance on standards, criteria, or courses of action in areas relevant to physical therapy education research, practice, or policy. These guidelines may be used for curriculum planning, curriculum development, in internal and external quality assurance processes and benchmarking, and standards assessment.

The Paediatric Content Areas were developed through a review of the literature on core competencies in paediatrics and a survey of the IOPTP member countries which was based on the literature review. The Survey process identified the *Essential Content Areas* (ECA) (where 50% or more countries agreed that these survey items were important for entry-level education) and *Recommended Content Areas* (RCA) (where 40%-49% of the countries agreed that these survey items were important for entry-level education). The guidelines developed by the IOPTP incorporated the ECAs and RCAs and highlighted additional areas that might be addressed.

Additionally, a mapping process was used to confirm that the previously identified ECAs and RCAs were represented in the WCPT guidelines and to identify areas in the WCPT guidelines that were not represented in the IOPTP survey. The mapping process also aided in identifying areas in the WCPT Guidelines that should be added to the IOPTP Guidelines. To better encompass the constructs of the WCPT Guidelines, the IOPTP is recommending that paediatric-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities be applied across all aspects of the patient management model outlined in the WCPT Guidelines. The IOPTP also is recommending that all aspects of evidence-based practice and the ICF-CY model are supported in the educational content. Additionally, provision of family-centered care and inclusion of content related to health promotion and fitness are recommended.

While the IOPTP guidelines have been developed with input from, and specific reference to, the Member Organisations of the IOPTP, it also was developed with the intent that countries who are not members of the IOPTP or countries where the profession is not represented in WCPT will be able to use the guidelines.

THE NATURE OF PHYSICAL THERAPY EDUCATION

Physical therapist professional entry-level education programs need to equip students with the necessary communication and decision-making skills to work in collaboration with their patient/client, carer, other professionals, and colleagues”^{1 p.7}

The physical therapist professional curriculum includes content, learning experiences and clinical education experiences that encompass: Management of patient/clients with an array of conditions across the lifespan.

Essential competencies in physical therapy entry-level education should prepare clinicians to provide evidence-based, patient and family-centered care for paediatric patients/clients and their families.

The graduate of a physical therapy entry-level education program should demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the content areas listed below. The graduate should be able to apply an understanding of these content areas to clinical decision making and to successfully interact with infants, children, adolescents and their families/carers.

ESSENTIAL CONTENT AREAS (ECA's) in PAEDIATRICS:

1. Typical development of motor, sensory, cardiorespiratory, cognitive, and social-emotional function.
2. Atypical development of motor, sensory, and cardiorespiratory function related to common paediatric conditions.
3. Selection and implementation of age-appropriate examination techniques related to:
 - a. Motor development and function
 - b. Other areas - global development
 - c. Integumentary system
 - d. Cardiorespiratory system
 - e. Orthotics, prosthetics, assistive devices
 - f. Functional training
 - g. Physical agents, electrotherapy

4. Selection and implementation of age-appropriate intervention techniques
 - a. Strengthening
 - b. Motor development
 - c. Motor control
 - d. Motor planning
 - e. Integumentary system
 - f. Cardiorespiratory system
 - g. Orthotics, prosthetics, assistive devices
 - h. Functional training
 - i. Physical agents, electrotherapy
5. Family-centered care
6. Culturally competent care
7. Age appropriate communication

RECOMMENDED CONTENT AREAS (RCA's) in PAEDIATRICS:

1. Typical development of language and communication - to assist the physical therapist in successfully interacting with infants, children, adolescents and their families.
2. Atypical cognitive and social-emotional development - to more effectively work with children with cognitive impairment, autism spectrum disorder and other paediatric conditions that may impact the child's ability to interact with the physical therapist and participate in the physical therapy process.
3. Laws and regulations related to services for individuals with disabilities/special needs - so that the physical therapist may more successfully assist the child/family in accessing available services.

Additionally, the WCPT Practice expectations (Section 5.1) cover content with unique paediatric information and application and should be included in physical therapy educational programs. These expectations address:

- a. Health promotion, wellness, fitness and injury prevention
- b. Inter-professional practice and/or working within the paediatric healthcare/educational team
- c. Delegation within the paediatric team

REFERENCE

1. WCPT Guideline for Physical Therapist Professional Entry Level Education. 2011