



ETHICAL GUIDELINES

for physiotherapists





Ethical guidelines for physiotherapists

A physiotherapist is a licensed healthcare professional whose role is to promote and maintain health, mobility, functional ability, and work capacity. A physiotherapist adheres to the shared client-centered values and principles of healthcare, aiming to enhance public health and ensure human-centered practices [1]. A physiotherapist respects life, human dignity, and self-determination and performs their duties with confidentiality. They are knowledgeable about the laws and regulations governing their field and comply with them. Ethical principles apply to both physical and digital environments.

A physiotherapist treats every client equally, regardless of age, gender, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, functional ability, health status, political views, or any other individual characteristic. A physiotherapist adopts a client-centered approach, supporting clients in various life situations.

Professional ethics are based on professional, evidence-based knowledge and skills, values internalization, and life experience. These enable physiotherapists to engage in ethical reflection, decision-making, and critical evaluation of their actions and consequences. The Ethical Guidelines of the Finnish Physiotherapists are based on the ethical guidelines of the World Physiotherapy organization and are adapted to meet national needs [2].

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- [1] Valtakunnallinen terveydenhuollon eettinen neuvottelukunta, ETENE-julkaisuja 32 2011. Sosiaali- ja terveysalan eettinen perusta. ETENE-julkaisuja+32+Sosiaali-+ja+terveysalan+eettinen+perusta.pdf
- [2] World Physiotherapy 2023. Ethical principles and the responsibilities of physiotherapists and member organisations – Policy statement. A91h47k6g_9q5h4y_lox.tmp.pdf (world.physio)

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Physiotherapist and client

A physiotherapist:

- Adopts a client-centered approach.
- Engages in interaction with the client, listens attentively, recognizes and respects their values and attitudes, and reinforces their participation.
- Sets therapy goals together with the client, prepares a plan, implements it, evaluates the actions and outcomes, and emphasizes the client's own responsibility in the rehabilitation process.
- Provides accurate and comprehensive information, including the expected effects and potential risks of therapy.
- Acknowledges that the client has the right to refuse the proposed therapy. If the client cannot make decisions themselves, the physiotherapist collaborates with the client's personal network.
- Acts in the client's best interest and advocates for the client in matters related to professional activities.



Compliance with regulations



A physiotherapist:

- Is familiar with the up-to-date laws and regulations related to their profession [3], complies with them, and makes ethical decisions based on these regulations.
- Maintains confidentiality in all situations and environments, not disclosing client information to third parties without the client's consent or legal justification.
- Ensures data security and privacy in all activities and environments.

[3] Suomen Fysioterapeutit 2023. Lainsäädäntö.
suomenfysioterapeutit.fi/fysioterapia/fysioterapeutittina-tyoskentely/lainsaadanto/

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Physiotherapist's expertise

A physiotherapist:

- Familiarizes themselves with the client's background, current status, and the assignment.
- Conducts proper examinations to establish a physiotherapeutic diagnosis.
- Implements evidence-based physiotherapy.
- Documents their activities truthfully and without delay.
- Respects the expertise of their own and other professional groups, consults specialists as needed, provides expert support, or refers the client to another expert when necessary.
- Takes personal responsibility for their work.

A physiotherapist has the:

- Right to independently assess the client's situation and determine the most appropriate intervention. They also have the right to refuse interventions that are not in the client's best interest.
- Right and duty to adhere to the scope of duties defined by their professional title.
- Right and duty to address particularly situations where their own safety is at risk.



Professionalism of a physiotherapist



A physiotherapist:

- Acts fairly, honestly, competently, and responsibly.
- Ensures that the client and, if necessary, their personal network understand the therapy goals, content, time allocation, and costs.
- Recognizes their professional role in relation to the client and their personal network.
- Is aware of their interaction style, values, and attitudes and their impact on their work.
- Commits to self-improvement, professional competence, and the development of their field.
- Recognizes the limits of their expertise.
- Operates within the rights of a licensed professional and the limits of their acquired specialization.
- Understands how their overall well-being affects their professionalism and performance as a physiotherapist.

Physiotherapist as a colleague

A physiotherapist:

- Recognizes their professional role within their work community and among colleagues.
- Respects and values their colleagues.
- Intervenes if a colleague's actions threaten patient safety or are not in the client's best interest.
- Is capable of engaging in professional discussions, including those related to their own practice.
- Serves as a professional role model for students.
- Enables high-quality and safe training for students, supporting their goal-oriented skill development [4].

Physiotherapist as a supervisor:

- Aims to create a safe and ethical work environment where issues and conflicts can be addressed.
- Builds structures within the workplace to support collegiality, well-being, safety, and resilience.

[4] Valtakunnallinen opiskelijaohjauksen kehittämisverkosto (ValOpe) 2017. Opiskelijaohjauksen laatusuosituksset. [Opiskelijaohjauksen laatusuosituksset.pdf](#) (tyks.fi)



Quality of practice

A physiotherapist:

- Commits to high-quality practice and justifies their actions and decisions.
- Adheres to good physiotherapy practices, emphasizing evidence-based activities.
- Seeks, utilizes, applies, and critically evaluates information in all environments (physical and digital).
- Understands the ethical principles of artificial intelligence, including accountability, privacy, fairness, reliability, transparency, and comprehensibility [5].

Physiotherapist as an employer or supervisor:

- Facilitates professional development and training, ensuring continuous learning and sufficient competence for employees for their assigned tasks.
- Supports the work community in delivering high-quality physiotherapy.



- Maintains their leadership skills.
- Regularly evaluates and develops organizational activities and processes with staff.

Physiotherapist as a researcher:

- Commits to adhering to ethical principles of research and good scientific practice [6].

Physiotherapist as an educator:

- Identifies their affiliations and roles, disclosing them appropriately.
- Adheres to the same ethical principles as when practicing as a physiotherapist.

[5] World Health Organization (WHO) 2021. *Ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health: WHO guidance* (s. 23-30).

[6] Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta (TENK) 2023. *Hyvä tieteellinen käytäntö. Hyvä tieteellinen käytäntö (HTK) Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta (tenk.fi)*



Society and economy

A physiotherapist:

- Acts according to the principles of social responsibility, considering economic, social, and environmental factors.
- Follows societal health policy discussions and contributes as an expert when necessary.
- Assumes responsibility for promoting public health.
- Commits to sustainable development principles [7], recognizing the impact of their actions on sustainability.

Physiotherapist as an entrepreneur:

- Adheres to good business practices.
- Prices services fairly and ethically to ensure profitability and quality.

[7] Suomen kestävän kehityksen toimikunta. Kestävän kehityksen globaali toimintaohjelma Agenda2023. Agenda2030 -toimintaohjelma | Kestävä kehitys (kestavakehitys.fi)

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Communication and marketing

A physiotherapist:

- Follows the same ethical guidelines, and principles in social media use as in all other activities.
- Does not publish identifiable client information, even if the client consents at the time (confidentiality applies to all environments, including social media).
- Conducts marketing clearly, understandably, and truthfully [8], preserving confidentiality and client privacy.
- Respects copyright [9, 10].

[8] Keskuskauppakamari 2021. Hyvää markkinointitapaa koskevat periaatteet. Hyvää markkinointitapaa koskevat periaatteet - Keskuskauppakamari

[9] Tekijänoikeus.fi. Mitä on tekijänoikeus? Tekijänoikeus | Tekijänoikeus.fi

[10] Kopiosto. Tekijänoikeuden ABC. Tekijänoikeuden ABC - Kopiosto





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FINNISH ASSOCIATION OF

Physiotherapists

