

30 August 2023

To whom it may concern

**Re: Neurofunctional physiotherapy in Brazil.**

World Physiotherapy is the sole international organisation for physiotherapy, representing more than 600,000 physiotherapists worldwide through its 127 member organisations. World Physiotherapy (previously known as the World Confederation for Physical Therapy) was founded in 1951 and since 1956 it has been a non-governmental organisation in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO).

World Physiotherapy is a founding member of the World Rehabilitation Alliance launched in July 2023 with the aim of being a powerful advocacy platform for the rehabilitation sector. Within this partnership we work with other members such as the International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to further the development of rehabilitation services around the world.

Physiotherapy, as a health profession, plays a key role in maintaining the health and well-being of the population. World Physiotherapy is committed to moving physiotherapy forward and to promoting the significant role the profession plays globally in improving health and wellbeing. World Physiotherapy encourages high standards of physiotherapy research, education and practice.

It has been brought to our attention by our member organisation in Brazil, Associação de Fisioterapeutas do Brasil, that some occupational therapists in Brazil believe that certain domains of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) fall within their scope of practice and are excluded from that of physiotherapists. We find this to be a misunderstanding of the physiotherapy profession and of how to appropriately use ICF.

ICF was designed to be a [common language and framework to describe disability, health and functioning](#). It does not specify which health professions may or may not use certain domains.

World Physiotherapy's policy statement on the relationship with other health professionals highlights the importance of inter-professional collaborative practice in the best interest of patients.

<https://world.physio/policy/ps-other-professionals>

The recently adopted World Physiotherapy policy statement on rehabilitation points out the following:

- a rehabilitation team consists of a range of professions
- physiotherapists play a vital role in the rehabilitation process reducing health-related problems associated with functional limitations and optimising outcomes, activities, participation and environmental factors for persons in need of rehabilitation

<https://world.physio/policy/policy-statement-rehabilitation>

---

The World Physiotherapy policy statement on description of physiotherapy includes the following definition:

Physiotherapy is services provided by physiotherapists to individuals and populations to develop, maintain and restore maximum movement and functional ability throughout the lifespan. The service is provided in circumstances where movement and function are threatened by ageing, injury, pain, diseases, disorders, conditions and/or environmental factors and with the understanding that functional movement is central to what it means to be healthy. Physiotherapy involves the interaction between the physiotherapist, patients/clients, other health professionals, families, care givers and communities in a process where movement potential is examined/assessed and goals are agreed upon, using knowledge and skills unique to physiotherapists. Physiotherapists are concerned with identifying and maximising quality of life and movement potential within the spheres of promotion, prevention, treatment/intervention and rehabilitation. These spheres encompass physical, psychological, emotional, and social wellbeing.

The policy statement is clearly referring to ICF language regarding the role of physiotherapists

- preventing impairments, activity limitations, participatory restrictions and disabilities in individuals at risk of altered movement behaviours due to health factors, socio-economic stressors, environmental factors and lifestyle factors
- providing interventions/treatment to restore integrity of body systems essential to movement, maximise function and recuperation, minimise incapacity, and enhance the quality of life, independent living and workability in individuals and groups of individuals with altered movement behaviours resulting from impairments, activity limitations, participatory restrictions and disabilities
- modifying environmental, home and work access and barriers to ensure full participation in one's normal and expected societal roles

<https://world.physio/policy/ps-descriptionPT>

The above resources clearly state that physiotherapists are central to the rehabilitation process which is always patient-centered, and includes the consideration of contextual factors, functions and participation.

Physiotherapists should not be excluded from using all domains of the ICF.

I respectfully request you to address this situation as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely



Mr. Jonathon Kruger  
Chief executive officer