

Executive Summary: Sports Physiotherapy Competencies and Standards 2005



Sports physiotherapy is a growing specialisation in cultures that strive to promote an active lifestyle and athletic excellence. This document presents competencies and standards that describe the professional behaviours of sports physiotherapists in Europe and explains the background to their development.

The development of competencies and standards represents the first stage of the Sports Physiotherapy for All (SPA) Project. This Leonardo da Vinci funded project aims to promote the mobility and recognition of sports physiotherapists in Europe and beyond, while enhancing safe participation in physical activity and sport.

Competency statements describe effective professional behaviours that integrate specific knowledge, skills and attitudes in a particular context (Ministry for Education, Culture and Science, The Netherlands, 2002). Standards are criteria for performance, describing the level at which competencies should be demonstrated. The competencies and standards were developed in several stages:

1. collection and content analysis of international documentation relating to the attributes and education of sports physiotherapists, where available.
2. discussion of an expert panel leading to cross-validation of themes derived from documentation, leading to the identification of sports physiotherapy roles and behaviours, described in the form of competencies by the researcher
3. internal and external review and revision of the competencies through the SPA Project website
4. acceptance of the competencies at the General Meeting of the International Federation of Sports Physiotherapy, 2004.
5. development of standards relating to each competency, using the themes derived from international documentation and discussion by the expert panel
6. a rigorous process of internal and external review and revision of the standards
7. acceptance of the merged competencies and standards at the General Meeting of the International Federation of Sports Physiotherapy, 2005.

This process led to the development of eleven competencies, designed to demonstrate behaviours expected at a master's level. Standards have been written to describe the specific abilities and behaviours of the sports physiotherapist in a defined context. An audit toolkit will be designed to enable the evaluation of competencies and standards. These will enable sports physiotherapists to provide evidence of their competencies and identify further learning needs.

Sports physiotherapy competencies and standards inform stakeholders, from professional regulators, sports organisations and committees, to employers and educators, and athletes of all levels and abilities. They provide a basis for policy development, enable quality assurance activities, and facilitate individual professional development.



A Leonardo Da Vinci Funded Project