

## Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy, or physical therapy as it is more commonly known in The United States, is the medical practice in which diseases, disabilities and other ailments are treated through physical rehabilitation or maintenance therapy means. It is the process through which physical conditions are evaluated, diagnosed and treated with therapy which focuses on building muscle strength and promoting healthy range of movement.

Physiotherapy is considered part of main stream medicine. Doctors of physical therapy are licensed physicians who have completed a Doctorate program and completed state licensing examinations, as well as registered with the medical board in their home state.

Physiotherapy practices typically have one or more Physical Therapists, as well as numerous support positions, including physical therapy assistants and physical therapy aides. Assistant level positions are the equivalent of nurses found in other medical practices. Aides usually play a more clerical support role in the practice.

### Physiotherapy Methods

Physiotherapy medical treatment starts with an assessment of a patient's current physical condition. The assessment process typically includes the taking of a medical history, as well as the performance of a physical exam during which the Physical Therapist will assess range of movement, muscle strength, and areas of obvious weakness or difficulty.

More often than not, a Physiotherapist receives a patient through a referral from another physician. Patients are often diagnosed with an injury, chronic or acute illness, or degenerative disease by another doctor and referred to a Physical Therapist to improve their condition or reduce the effects of the ailment or disease on the patient's ability to perform everyday activities.

After the initial physical assessment is completed and the Physiotherapist has had the opportunity to review the patient's medical history, a treatment plan is put together that is tailored to the individual patient's needs. That treatment plan may include staged exercises, massage therapy, ultrasound therapy, and any number of other methods, all designed to improve the patient's ability to move and live more fully and free of pain.

In addition to physical therapy exercises and therapeutic treatments, patients receive education and other types of assistance in a Physical Therapist's office. They may be educated about their physical condition and the best methods of dealing with that condition on a daily basis. They may also be informed of mobility assistance devices, functional aides and other tools which can make their life easier and allow them to live more independently even in the face of disability or progressive illness.

### Physiotherapy Jobs

There are three primary positions found in physiotherapy practices: Physical Therapists, physical therapy assistants, and physical therapy aides. Of course, there are also specialty positions within those larger job categories. For example, there are physical therapy assistants who may specialize in cardiopulmonary rehabilitation who work primarily with patients recovering from a heart attack or stroke, and those who live with breathing or circulatory problems.

- **Physiotherapist / Physical Therapist** – Doctors who specialize in this form of medical practice are Physiotherapists or Physical Therapists.

- **Physiotherapy Assistants / Physical Therapy Assistants** – Skilled nursing staff and technicians in physiotherapy practices are classified as Physiotherapy Assistants.
- **Physiotherapy Aides / Physical Therapy Aides** – The clerical staff and individuals who assist with non-direct patient care activities in physiotherapy practices are considered Physiotherapy Aides.

### **Education and Training Requirements**

The educational requirements for those who wish to work in physiotherapy will vary based upon position. Aides are typically high school graduates who receive on the job training in a clinical practice. They will receive training in clerical aspects of managing practice and patient records, as well as training in assisting with minor, non-medical patient care activities, like transporting patients, prepping patients for therapy sessions and similar tasks.

An Associate Degree from an accredited program in physical therapy is the minimum requirement for those who wish to work as physiotherapy assistants. The Associate of Physical Therapy or Associate of Applied Science in Physical Therapy Degree program will combine classroom study with clinic training. Some clinical training will be conducted in a laboratory setting, and some will be within a physical therapy practice, as is the case with internships.

Physiotherapists will need to complete a minimum of a Master's Degree, though most go on to obtain their Doctorate eventually, especially as the field of physiotherapy becomes more competitive and more and more employers expect a higher level of education from job candidates. Physiotherapists complete a Bachelor's Degree program before entering graduate school. Their undergraduate studies include classroom study as well as laboratory work.

Graduate physiotherapy education consists of focused analytical work and also includes practical education received by working in the field of physical therapy as a resident in training. After completing the required coursework and training, Physiotherapists must sit for and pass a medical licensing exam before being certified to practice in the field.

### **Registration and Licensing Requirements**

Physiotherapy aides are not required to hold a license or register with the state medical board. Physiotherapy assistants may or may not be required to hold a license, dependent upon the state in which they work; however, most states have a registration or certification requirement in place for assistants in physical therapy practices.

Physiotherapists must not only complete the state licensing boards but must also be registered and licensed to practice medicine in any state in which they intend to work. Most will also need to hold a DEA license in order to prescribe and dispense medications to patients.