

What is a Physiotherapist?

Physiotherapy is a professional, highly credible and natural medical treatment. The primary focus of physiotherapy is the restoration of function. Physiotherapists assess and diagnose the problem, then plan and provide treatment programs that aim to restore function or minimise dysfunction after disease or injury. This is achieved through a combination of manual therapy, movement training and the use of physical and electro physical agents.

Physiotherapists provide services to people of all ages and across a wide spectrum of work environments - acute Hospital setting, Rehabilitation, Outpatients and in the Community.

Roles of a Physiotherapist

- Assess physical condition of patients to identify problems and plan appropriate treatment
- Perform spinal and peripheral joint mobilisation and manipulation (where appropriate)
- Assist in the reduction of pain and swelling, improve the range of movement, assist in muscle re-education and strengthening through the use of equipment/techniques such as hot/cold packs, electrotherapy, manual therapy, biofeedback, taping and splinting
- Retrain patients to walk or use devices such as walking frames, crutches, sticks, wheelchairs, splints to assist/improve mobility
- Assess development of premature babies and plan and provide therapy for children with movement problems/physical disabilities
- Assist individuals with permanent disabilities to maximise their ability to function as optimally as possible and to manage the physical demands of daily living
- Work as part of a team of health professionals, to provide a multidisciplinary care plan, to improve a persons health
- Educate patients, their families, industry and the community to lead healthy lifestyles and to prevent injury and disability
- Plan and implement community fitness/exercise programs, including hydrotherapy programs for people both with and without a disability
- Maintain relevant documentation associated with patient care eg. patient records, reports, statistics

Specialisations

Physiotherapists may specialise in specific areas such as musculoskeletal physiotherapy, women's health, aged care, chest conditions, occupational health and safety, sports medicine, babies and young children, problems of the nervous system and spinal injuries, administration, education or research.

Physiotherapists may work as part of a health care team, independently in private practice, within the school system or as industry consultants. Some areas that Physiotherapists work include:

- Aged Care
- Rehabilitation
- Women's Health
- Paediatrics
- Outpatients
- Orthopaedics

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Adapted from Australian Government Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations Job Guide <http://www.jobguide.thegoodguides.com.au/> and reviewed by SWSLHD staff

- Intensive Care
- Medical and Surgical wards
- Emergency Department

Career Opportunities

Physiotherapy, as a profession is in high demand. Within SWSLHD, job opportunities are very good, with the support of other staff. New services are continually being developed and this is providing a widening job market for Physiotherapists from Grade 1 Physiotherapist through to Grade 7 (Clinical Specialist or Manager positions). Most Physiotherapists are at a Grade 1 level and some are at a Grade 2 or Grade 3 level indicating a position of Management or Clinical expertise.

Physiotherapists work in a variety of settings including hospitals, community health centres, centres for physically disabled people, mental health services, rehabilitation centres, sports clinics and fitness centres, government departments and universities. Physiotherapists can also work in managerial and research positions.

It is a medium-sized occupation with good job prospects. Continued emphasis on sport and fitness, occupational health and safety, and aged care has increased the demand for physiotherapists. Opportunities also exist to become self-employed in private practice or to work part time.

Qualifications Required

Full-time 4 year Bachelors Degree in Physiotherapy or Applied Science (Physiotherapy) at one of the tertiary institutions offering such a program. Prerequisite subjects, or assumed knowledge, in one or more of biology, physics, mathematics, chemistry, and any two units of English are normally required. Upon completion, graduates are usually eligible to apply for registration with the Physiotherapists Registration Board in the State they wish to practise. The first years of the course are predominantly theory and practical based, while later on, students undertake clinical placements in hospitals, practices, and other settings.

Supervision Provided

A specific new graduate program operates across most Physiotherapy Departments in SWSLHD. This is a specific 12-month contract aimed at consolidating the undergraduate training that new graduate Physiotherapists have had. A comprehensive orientation program is provided for all new staff members with ongoing support.

What sort of person should I be?

- Have a genuine interest in and care for people
- Analytical but personable
- Flexible
- Patient
- Good physical fitness
- Able to deal with disability

Personal Skills required of a Physiotherapist

- Patience
- Genuine interest in people
- Good health and physically fit
- Reliable and organised
- High level of knowledge (e.g. in anatomy, physiology etc)
- High level of initiative
- Ability to prioritise
- Ability to judge the level of physical independence of a person to challenge them to achieve independence safely
- Good interpersonal skills
- Good problem solving skills
- Able to work as part of a team
- High level communication skills
- Ability to relate to people of all ages and backgrounds