



Physical Therapy in Mental Health?

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At the begin was an international network of physical therapists working in the field of psychiatry and mental health with the origin at Leuven University (Belgium) from in 2006.

The International Organization of Physical Therapy in Mental Health (I.O.P.T.M.H) was accepted as a W.C.P.T subgroup at the 17th General Meeting, in 2011 and recon-firmed in 2015 and 2019, including 21 member countries, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, but within I.O.P.T.M.H, there is a network of individual physical therapists, representing 59 nations from 6 continents.

The I.O.P.T.M.H provides a consensus statement on the role of qualified physical therapists within mental health. This policy statement has been developed by the Executive Committee and physical therapists with expertise in mental health (2019) [1].

According Probst, *et al.* (2016) Physical therapy in mental health is defined as a specialty within physical therapy [2,3].

It is implemented in different health and mental health settings, psychiatry and psychosomatic medicine.

Physical therapy in mental health is person-centered and aimed at children, adolescents, adults and elderly with mild, moderate and severe, acute and chronic mental health problems, in primary and community care, inpatients and outpatients.

Physical therapists in mental health provide health promotion, preventive health care, treatment and rehabilitation for individuals and groups.

Physical therapists in mental health create a therapeutic relationship to provide assessment and services specifically related to the complexity of mental health within a supportive environment applying a bio-psycho-social model.

The core of physical therapy in mental health is to optimize wellbeing and empowering the individual by promoting functional movement, movement awareness and physical activity, exercise, bringing together physical and mental aspects.

Physical therapists in mental health play a key part in the integrated multidisciplinary team/interprofessional care.

Physical therapy in mental health is based on the available scientific and best clinical evidence.

The key elements of physical therapy intervention in mental health include:

1. Observation and evaluation tools
2. Design and implementation of individual and group therapeutic exercise programs
3. Closeness/touch/massage
4. Biofeedback
5. Relaxation and breathing techniques
6. Psychomotor therapy
7. Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS)
8. Virtual reality application techniques.

Paediatric psychiatry specific elements

Though physical therapy in mental health for children and adolescents is currently well embedded in different setting (such as child psychiatry, rehabilitations centers, private practices, etc.), it is a relatively young domain. The field of physical therapy in mental health in children and adolescents encompasses different approaches and therapeutic techniques, ranging from assessment and observation to body awareness techniques, relaxation, experienced oriented family therapy, physical activity, etc. [4-7].

Geriatric psychiatry specific elements

The cornerstones are to improve the quality of life of the elderly with mental health problems (e.g. dementia and functional psychiatric disorders).

The goals are:

- Slowing down the reduction of daily activities
- Improving cardiovascular function
- Strength, coordination and balance improvement
- Reduction of the risks of falling due to the psycho-pharmaceutical treatment but also the weakening of the possibilities of vision and gait.

Adapted therapeutic exercise and body-oriented approaches such as yoga-, tai chi-, mindfulness-derived exercises or massage have a positive influence on cognition, communication, social behavior, sleep, depression and anxiety

Incorporating physical therapy into mental health will lead to improve both physical and mental health as well as experiencing feelings of well-being from our patients.

Let's bring the contribution of physical therapists in mental health into the spotlight, starting from completing the application as an interested physiotherapist (<http://www.ioptmh.org/Colleagues.html>) and participating en masse at the 8th international conference of physiotherapy in psychiatry and mental health (February 8 - 10, 2021 due Covid19), Helsinki, Finland and at the 9th in Athens, Greece, in 2022 [8-15].

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