World Physiotherapy
Europe region

Framework –
Digital Capability Framework for Physiotherapists in the Europe Region

Professional Practice Working Group (PPWG)

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FRAMEWORK – DIGITAL CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK FOR PHYSIOTHERAPISTS IN THE EUROPE REGION

Europe Region

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PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

As digital environments in healthcare delivery rapidly evolve, physiotherapists are required to acquire and demonstrate proficiency in key domains of digital professionalism. This document aims to outline a comprehensive competency framework for addressing the challenges of digitalization in physiotherapy practice across Europe. It emphasises the role of digital competencies to support safe, effective, and ethical patient care. This initiative aligns with European health policies promoting digital health literacy, positioning physiotherapists as proactive contributors to the future of digitally integrated healthcare.

The framework is organised into five key domains: Digital Professionalism, Leadership and Advocacy, Data and Information Quality, Information-enabled Care, and Technology. Each domain is further divided into subdomains, outlining specific areas of focus and detailed capability statements. These statements provide clear, actionable guidance on the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for physiotherapists to effectively navigate and contribute to the digital healthcare landscape. The framework is designed to support practitioners, educators, and policymakers in promoting a consistent and future-oriented approach to digital competency development across the physiotherapy profession.

This framework serves as a general guide, intended to be adaptable to the diverse stages of digitalisation across member countries of the Europe Region of World Physiotherapy. It offers a flexible roadmap, allowing each member to tailor its implementation according to its current progress and specific needs. While providing clear objectives, the framework ultimately aims to inspire continuous advancement toward comprehensive digital integration within physiotherapy practice across Europe. This document aims to guide physiotherapists in fostering awareness regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI) usage and promoting environmentally friendly practices in their digital consumption.

Figure 1. Domains of the digital capability framework for physiotherapists.

1. DOMAIN 1 – DIGITAL PROFESSIONALISM

Digital professionalism has been defined as “the attitudes and behaviours (some of which may occur in private settings) reflecting traditional professionalism paradigms that are manifested through digital media” (Wholey et al, 2018).

1.1. Professional Development

Physiotherapists use digital tools to achieve and maintain personal development and learning requirements.

1.1.1. Capability statements

- Use digital technologies to support their learning and professional growth.
- They stay updated on tools and innovations in digital health, utilize technologies to enhance practice and track professional development requirements.
- Advocate for innovative digital soluti0ons to improve learning and patient care.

1.2. Procedural Knowledge

Physiotherapists use of digital tools in health and care aligns with procedural, policy, legal, ethical, security and privacy requirements reflecting recognised professional standards.

1.2.1 Capability statements

- Follow rules to keep information private, secure, and ethical.
- Spot and address risks, including unfair or harmful practices, to protect individuals and organisations.
- Consider cultural and social differences to ensure equal access to digital healthcare for everyone.

1.3. Digital Identity

Physiotherapists use digital tools to develop and maintain their personal online safety, identity and reputation.

1.3.1 Capability statements

- Keep track of their growth and skills while ensuring their online presence aligns with ethical and organisational policies.
- Be mindful that online posts can be permanent and shape their digital footprint.
- A strong professional digital identity should highlight their expertise, education, and experience in a positive way.

2. DOMAIN 2 – LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

The WHO Global Strategy on Digital Health (2020–2025) highlights leadership as vital across vision, governance, design, delivery, and operations. Health professionals act as advocates for patients and communities, promoting reforms to improve quality and access. Leadership in digital health is crucial as professionals plan, implement, and evaluate initiatives that enhance outcomes and resource use. This domain bridges the gap between policy and patient-centered care.

2.1 Patient Digital Health Advocacy

Physiotherapists work in partnership with patients and colleagues to select and use appropriate technology and advocate for equity of access to digital health technology.

2.1.1 Capability statements

- Supports patient and consumer access to digital health technologies and communication tools, including telehealth.
- Evaluates the benefits and risks of digital health applications to assist patients/consumers effectively.
- Partners with patients/consumers to use digital health in culturally appropriate, informed decision-making and to promote health literacy.

2.2 Leadership within Organisation

Physiotherapists are visible and actively involved in the leadership of digital change and contribute to the development of inclusive digital services, policies and procedures within their organisations.

2.2.1 Capability statements

- Advocates for and promotes the use of digital health technologies and innovation within the organisation and among peers.
- Contributes to the development of digital health policies, procedures, and education to support organisational capability.
- Utilises digital health tools to enhance communication and supports the successful adoption of innovative practices in Health and Social Care.

2.3 Digital Leadership in Health and Social Care Professions

Physiotherapists provide active leadership in digital health design and engage with the development of digital health strategy and policy to contribute to national digital health decisions.

2.3.1 Capability statements

- Promotes physiotherapy leadership in the design, implementation, and evaluation of digital health technologies in Health and Social Care.

- Explores and contributes to the use of emerging digital data and systems to transform health and care outcomes.
- Engages in decision-making, strategy, and policy development related to digital health within the physiotherapy profession.

3. DOMAIN 3 – DATA AND INFORMATION QUALITY

Digital health relies on quality data for information management. Physiotherapists have a critical role in the capture, creation, recording, use, and stewardship of accurate, complete, timely, and increasingly large quantities of clinical and health care data. Data informs practice, enhances outcomes, and supports collaborative, person-centred care across jurisdictions.

3.1 Physiotherapists have a critical role in capturing accurate, timely, structured data from multiple sources (including sensor-derived, PROMs and telehealth data) to support cross-border, person-centred care

3.1.1 Capability statements

- Understands that physiotherapists are crucial in the capture of data and advise on their use within the health and care system.
- Systematically and accurately collects and records relevant data in a structured form.
- Understands the benefits and risks of using patient/consumer generated data in delivering care.

3.2 Physiotherapists ensure that data is collected, managed, and shared responsibly

3.2.1 Capability statements

- Understands the purpose, structure, use, and storage of electronic health records.
- Understands who uses health data and how, for the benefit of the patient, for research and the health and care system.

3.3 Physiotherapists understand the evolving value of data throughout its lifecycle and apply this understanding to enhance clinical insight, service delivery and research

3.3.1 Capability statements

- Recognises the role of data integrity in health and care and the importance of complete, timely and accurate data.
- Understands the transition from data, through information and knowledge, to wisdom and decision making.

4. DOMAIN 4 – INFORMATION-ENABLED CARE

Physiotherapy care requires rigorous data analysis and critical appraisal to inform quality clinical decisions and expand knowledge. Physiotherapists need critical thinking skills to analyse complex data for patient care. This approach supports continuity of care across different environments and ensures connected patient care. Digital health tools facilitate these changes by enabling information exchange, which is crucial for safe, quality, and evidence-based health and care.

4.1 Data Sharing

Physiotherapists appropriately use and share digital data with other physiotherapists and patients.

4.1.1 Capability statements

- Identifies the purposes, benefits, and risks of aggregating clinical data from multiple sources.
- Recognises the various data sources available and judges their quality, including patient-generated data.
- Understands the importance of data analytics and how they influence decision making and care delivery.

4.2 Information Creation and Use

Physiotherapists use data from a wide range of sources to create information for themselves, their patients, and other health and care providers and users to implement, support and evaluate care.

4.2.1 Capability statements

- Sources and critically evaluates information to support evidence-based decision-making for practice, education, and research.
- Uses their skills to assist patients to access and evaluate electronic health information.
- Recognises the potential of digital health to support current physiotherapy practice and enable new models of care.

4.3 Extending Practice

Physiotherapists use information to develop, extend, and support evidence-based care in critical decision-making.

4.3.1 Capability statements

- Advocates for the use of digital health technologies to support innovation, quality improvement, research, and evidence-based practice.
- Uses digital technologies to facilitate patient engagement, education, and self-management.

- Understands and evaluates the impact of digital health on the role of the physiotherapist, physiotherapy practice, patient safety, patient interaction, and the quality of care.

5. DOMAIN 5 – TECHNOLOGY

Technology is transforming health practice, enabling faster diagnosis and precise therapies. Digital tools improve care recording, information sharing, and continuity while reducing duplication. Although access varies, digitalisation in Europe has the potential to improve services, processes, and outcomes. Technology is therefore a key domain for a digitally capable workforce.

5.1 Appropriate Technologies

Physiotherapists are able to identify and recommend appropriate digital technologies for their environment and for patients/consumers and use these where available.

5.1.1 Capability statements

- Physiotherapists recognise the right technology for the clinical or professional situation or identify when the wrong one is being used and understand the principles of digital clinical safety to keep patients/consumers safe.
- Physiotherapists maintain the ability to communicate appropriately with other professionals and patients/consumers using a range of electronic means.

5.2 Digital Health Governance

Physiotherapists are able to implement policy and procedures that govern digital health use in their workplace.

5.2.1 Capability statements

- Understands policies and procedures that govern the management, adoption and use of digital health technologies and the principles of data and information governance, including privacy and security requirements.
- Uses a range of devices, applications and software for undertaking clinical responsibilities and ensures reporting of errors and near misses and monitoring of outcomes.

5.3 Problem Solving

Physiotherapists are able to use digital technologies to support problem solving in practice.

5.3.1 Capability statements

- Demonstrates the ability to solve problems when using digital health technologies.
- Demonstrates an ability to detect, report and action technology related errors.

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