



## Importance of physiotherapeutic diagnostics Importancia del diagnóstico fisioterapéutico

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### Dear Editor:

All healthcare professionals have a legal and moral obligation to make a diagnosis (reasoned assessment of the circumstances that occur in the healthcare process that is going to be initiated in the patient)<sup>1</sup>. The doctor in his field will proceed to make a medical diagnosis and physiotherapists who work as independent professionals, as well as members of health service provider teams, are subject to the ethical principles of the WCPT (World Confederation for Physical Therapy). They can act as first contact professionals, and patients/clients can request direct services without needing to be referred by another healthcare professional<sup>2</sup>. By making their own kinetic-functional or physiotherapeutic diagnosis and the required intervention plan, according to the patient's pathology.

The physiotherapeutic diagnosis is the process that identifies and describes the functional alterations of movement and the physical deficiencies of a patient. This diagnosis focuses on movement limitations, pain, strength, balance, posture, and other factors that affect physical function, rather than identifying specific medical pathologies, as a medical diagnosis would do<sup>3</sup>.

It is essential to understand that medical diagnosis and physiotherapy diagnosis are two completely different entities. The physiotherapist must make his diagnosis from his professional perspective, without trying to replace the doctor. Entering the field of medical diagnosis would be an act of intrusion. Therefore, the ethical and professional line requires us to draw a clear distinction between these two spheres<sup>4</sup>.

Physiotherapy diagnosis is not limited to the identification of a specific pathology, but rather aims to improve the functionality and quality of life of the patient, guiding clinical decisions and allowing the establishment of objectives with measurable results in the short and long term<sup>5</sup>.

Physiotherapy diagnosis must follow a structured process that allows the musculoskeletal dysfunction to be identified accurately. Cleland et al.<sup>6</sup> propose an evidence-based methodology, the physiotherapist should: i) Collect a detailed clinical history: This includes identifying the reason for the consultation, the evolution of the symptoms, and factors that aggravate or alleviate the pain. ii) Perform a thorough physical assessment: The physical assessment includes specific orthopedic and neurological tests for each region of the body, which allow the detection of pain patterns and movement limitations. iii) Apply specific functional tests: These tests evaluate the patient's functional capacity in daily activities and allow the physiotherapist to see how the dysfunction affects movement. iv) Interpret the results with an evidence-based approach: analyze the findings according to current guidelines and studies, to determine the appropriate treatment and establish clear objectives.

Use of the ICF (International Functional Rating) in physiotherapy diagnosis. The ICF belongs to the “family” of international classifications developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), which can be applied to various aspects of health. Its main objective is “to provide a unified and standardized language and a conceptual framework for the description of health and health-related states.” To draft the diagnosis, a generic paragraph is made grouping both the corporal and functional components of the ICF and, in a complementary way, the contextual component in a separate paragraph<sup>7</sup>.

Elaborating an accurate physiotherapy diagnosis is essential to carry out a correct treatment on the patient and thus reestablish their functional capacities, to the extent possible.

### **Conflicts of interest**

There are no conflicts interest.

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### **Ethical considerations**

This document has been prepared with due regard to the authors as a source of scientific information.

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