

Physiotherapy Assessment of People with Neurological Conditions in Australia: A National Survey of Clinical Practice

Authors : Jill Garner, Belinda Lange, Sheila Lennon, Maayken van den Berg

Abstract : Currently, there are approximately one billion people worldwide affected by a neurological condition. Many of whom are assessed and treated by a physiotherapist in a variety of settings. There is a lack of consensus in the literature related to what is clinically assessed by physiotherapists in people with neurological conditions. This study aimed to explore assessment in people with neurological conditions, including how health care setting, experience, and therapeutic approach, may influence neurological assessment. A national survey targeted Australian physiotherapists who assess adults with neurological conditions as part of their clinical practice. The survey consisted of 39 questions and was distributed to physiotherapists through the Australian Physiotherapy Association, and Chief Allied Health Officers across Australia and advertised on the National Neurological Physiotherapy Facebook page. In total, 395 respondents consented to the survey from all states within Australia. Most respondents were female (85.4%) with a mean (SD) age of 35.7 years. Respondents reported working clinically in acute, community, outpatients, and community settings. Stroke was the most assessed condition (58.0%). There is variability in domains assessed by Australian physiotherapists, with common inclusions of balance, muscle strength, gait, falls and safety, function, goal setting, range of movement, pain, coordination, activity tolerance, postural alignment and symmetry and upper limb. There is little evidence to support what physiotherapists assess in practice, in different settings, and in different states within Australia and not enough information to develop a decision tree regarding what is important for assessment in different settings. Further research is needed to explore this area and develop a consensus around best practices.

Keywords : physiotherapy, neurological, assessment, domains

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