

Direct access and self-referral to physical therapy: findings from a global survey of WCPT member organisations.

# Direct access and self-referral to physical therapy: findings from a global survey of WCPT member organisations.

# Summary

**Background:** Direct access to physical therapy services is advocated for in WCPT's policies, but the extent to which it exists worldwide was unknown.

**Objective:** To map the presence of direct access and self-referral to physical therapy services among WPCT's member organisations in the context of physical therapy practice and health systems.

**Method:** An on-line survey was developed and refined following a workshop in the European region of WCPT in 2010. Data was gathered over a 12 month period from July 2010-July 2011. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and content analysis was used to analyse open-ended responses to identify themes and patterns. Responses were followed up with member organisations where required.

**Results:** A response rate of 68% was achieved. Direct access and self-referral to physical therapy was reported by 58% of respondents. Entry level education equipped physical therapists for direct access and self-referral in 69% of WCPT's member organisations. When self-referring privately to physical therapy most insurance companies would not provide reimbursement without a physician referral. National physical therapy associations (72%) and the public (84%) were seen to be in support of direct access and self-referral, with less support from policy makers (35%) and physicians (16%). Physical therapists' ability to assess, diagnose and refer on was more prevalent in the presence of direct access and self-referral.

**Conclusions:** Professional legislation, the medical profession, politicians and policy makers can act as both barriers and facilitators for direct access and self-referral. Evidence for clinical and cost effectiveness and examples of good practice, are seen as vital resources that could be shared internationally and professional leadership has an important role in facilitating change and advocacy.

#### **Tables**

The results from across the member organisations have been collated by region and presented in the following tables. Consent from member organisations has been obtained to share this information among WCPT's member organisations. The tables are not for public dissemination.

### **Publications**

Two papers have been accepted for peer-reviewed publication:

Bury TJ, Stokes EK. A Global View of Direct Access and Patient Self-Referral for Physical Therapy: Implications for the Profession. *Physical Therapy* In Press scheduled for April 2013 issue

Bury TJ, Stokes EK. Direct access and patient/client self-referral to physiotherapy: a review of contemporary practice within the European Union. *Physiotherapy* In Press

Once these are available online details will be made available to member organisations and via the WCPT website on the direct access/self-referral page: http://wcpt.org/node/34062

#### **Enquiries**

Please direct all enquiries to Tracy Bury, Director Professional Policy tbury@wcpt.org

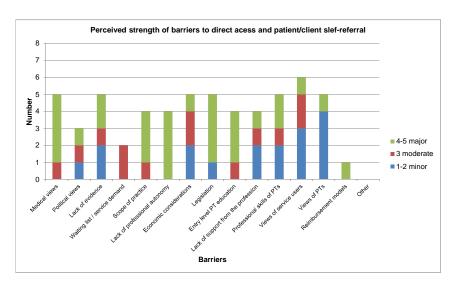
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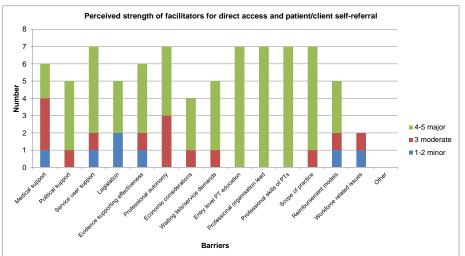
## Profile of direct access and patient/client self-referral to physical therapy in the Africa Region of WCPT

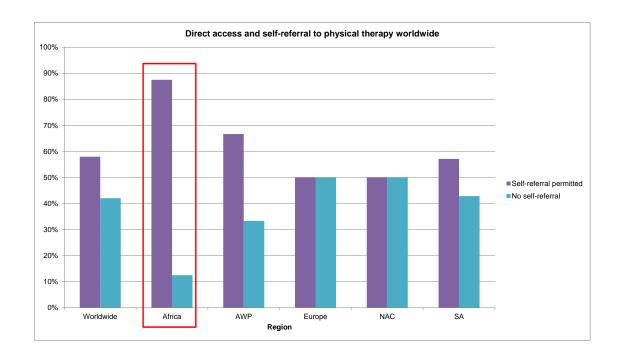
					Scop	e of practice				Educ	ation		Support for Self	-referral	
WCPT Member Organisation:	National legislation present?	Can service users can refer themselves to PT without a medical/ physician referral?	Self-referral in public and/or private settings?	In the presence of self-referral are there limitations?	Are PTs permitted to assess?	Are PTs permitted to diagnose?	Are PTs permitted to treat?	Are PTs permitted to refer on to other specialties/ services?	Are PTs permitted to offer preventative advice?	Do the expected competencies of graduates from entry level physical therapy programmes prepare them to accept self-referrals on qualification?	Post- entry level education requirements for self-referral	Degree of support for direct access/self referral to physical therapy from MO	makers in favour of direct	Public in favour of direct access/self- referral?	Doctors/ physicians in favour of direct access/self- referral?
Cameroon: Cameroon Society of Physiotherapy	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes						
Ethiopia: Ethiopian Physiotherapists Association	Yes	Yes	Private & public		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	No
Kenya: Kenya Society of Physiotherapists	No	Yes	Private		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	No
Malawi: Physiotherapy Association of Malawi	Yes	Yes	Private		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	No	Period supervised practice Period CPD Masters level	Limited support	Don't know	Yes	Don't know
Namibia: Namibian Society of Physiotherapy	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes						
Nigeria: Nigeria Society of Physiotherapy	Yes	No	Private *		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Is unsure	Don't know	Yes	No
Rwanda: Association of Rwandan Physiotherapy	Yes														
South Africa: South African Society of Physiotherapy	Yes	Yes	Private & public	Public - limited implementation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Compulsory community service year on qualifying before they will receive "independant practitioner" status.	Completely supportive	No	Yes	No
Swaziland: Association of Physiotherapists of Swaziland	No	Yes	Private & public		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zambia: Zambia Society of Physiotherapy	Yes	Yes	Private & public		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Period supervised practice Period CPD Masters level	Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	No
Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Physiotherapy Association	Yes	Yes	Private & public		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Don't know

NB: Results are presented as submitted by member organisations.

<sup>\*</sup> Variations in different settings may reflect differences in the legislation jurisdiction (eg covers public services only), service provision (eg preventative advice only) and/or national limitations as noted



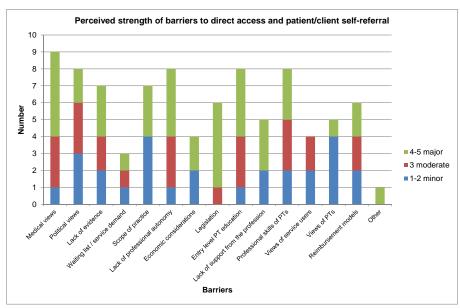


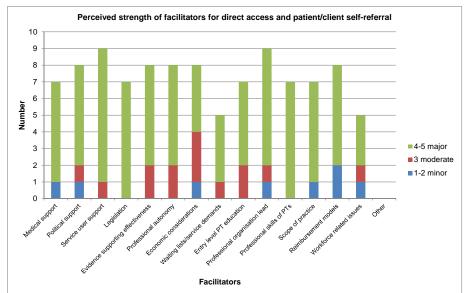


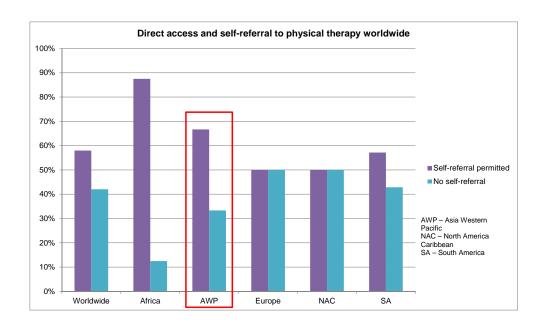
				Scope	of practice	е				Educ	ation	Support for Self-referral				
WCPT Member Organisation:	National legislation present?	Can service users can refer themselves to PT without a medical/ physician referral?	Self-referral in public and/or private settings?	In the presence of self- referral are there limitations?	Are PTs permitted to assess?	Are PTs permitted to diagnose?	Are PTs permitted to treat?	Are PTs permitted to refer on to other specialties/ services?	Are PTs permitted to offer preventative advice?	Do the expected competencies of graduates from entry level physical therapy programmes prepare them to accept self-referrals on qualification?	Post- entry level education requirements for self-referral	Degree of support for direct access/self referral to physical therapy from MO	makers in favour of direct	Public in favour of direct access/self- referral?	Doctors/ physicians in favour of direct access/self- referral?	
Australia: Australian Physiotherapy Association	Yes	Yes	Private & public	Private - some 3rd party providers do require a referral from a physician prior to treatment for full rebates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Cambodia: Cambodian Physical Therapy Association	Yes	Yes	No		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes							
Fiji: Fiji Physiotherapy Association	No	Yes	Private & public							Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Japan: Japanese Physical Therapy Association	Yes	No	No		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes		Period of CPD	Completely supportive		Yes		
Macau: Macau Physical Therapists Association	Yes	Yes	Private & public		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	Don't know	
New Zealand: The New Zealand Society of Physiotherapists	Yes	Yes	Private & public		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	Yes	
Oman: Omani Physiotherapy Association	Yes	No	Private *	Not allowed by law but takes place in a few settings - practitioner & client take risk	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Period of CPD Masters level	Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	Don't know	
Taiwan: The Physical Therapy Association of the Republic of China (Taiwan)	Yes	No	No		Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	No	Yes	No	
Thailand: The Physical Therapy Association of Thailand	Yes	Yes	Private & public		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	No	
United Arab Emirates: Emirates Physiotherapy Society	No	No	Private *	Self-referral not covered by insurance payments						No		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Don't know	

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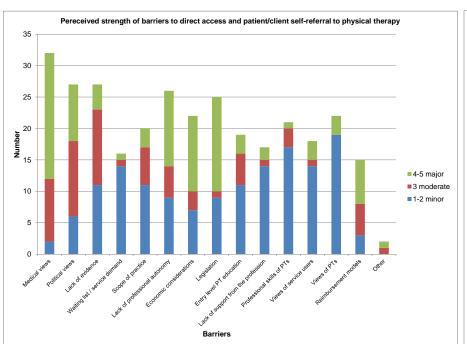


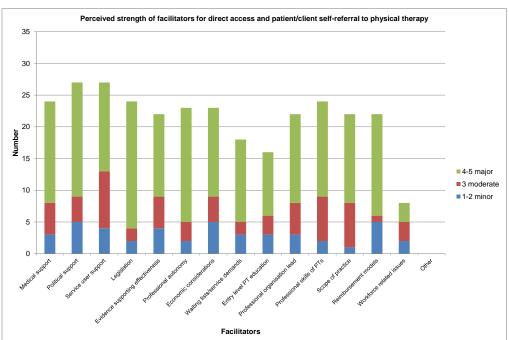
				Sco	pe of practic	e				Educ	cation		Support for Self-referral			
WCPT Member Organisation:	National legislation present?	Can service users can refer themselves to PT without a medical/ physician referral?		In the presence of self- referral are there limitations?	Are PTs permitted to assess?	Are PTs permitted to diagnose?	Are PTs permitted to treat?	Are PTs permitted to refer on to other specialties/ services?	Are PTs permitted to offer preventative advice?	Do the expected competencies of graduates from entry level physical therapy programmes prepare them to accept self-referrals on qualification?	Post- entry level education requirements for self-referral	Degree of support for direct access/self referral to physical therapy from MO	makers in favour	Public in favour of direct access/self- referral?	Doctors/ physicians in favour of direct access/self- referral?	
Austria: Austrian Physiotherapy Association	Yes	No	No		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	No	Don't know	No	
Belgium: Axxon, Physical Therapy in Belgium	Yes	No	No		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	
Croatia: Croatian Council of Physiotherapists	Yes	Yes	Private	Private - patients have to be self-funding	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	No	Yes	No	
Czech Republic: Union of Physiotherapists of the Czech Republic	Yes	No	Private *	Private - prevention only	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Is unsure	No	Don't know	No	
Denmark: The Association of Danish Physiotherapists	Yes	Yes	Private		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	No	
Estonia: Estonian Association of Physiotherapists	Yes	No	No		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Period of supervised practice Period of CPD	Completely supportive	No	Yes	Yes	
Finland: Finnish Association of Physiotherapists	Yes	Yes	Private & public	Private - any conditions treated, but no reimbursement from national social or private insurance Public - specialised medical care and occupational health require a physician referral	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Don't know	Don't know	
France: Federation Francaise des Masseurs Kinesitherapeutes Reeducateurs (FFMKR)	Yes	Yes	Private	Private - restricted to prevention, health education, comfort massages, osteopathy	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Limited support	No	Yes	No	
Germany: Deutscher Verband fuer Physiotherapie	Yes	No	No		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Period of CPD	Completely supportive	No	Yes	No	
Greece: Panhellenic Physical Therapy Association	Yes	No	No		Yes	No		Yes	Yes	No	Period of supervised practice Period of CPD	Is unsure	Don't know	Don't know	No	
Hungary: Association of Hungarian Physiotherapists	Yes	No	Private *		No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	No	
Iceland: Association of Icelandic Physiotherapists	Yes	No	No		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	
Ireland: Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists	Yes	Yes	Private		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Israel: Israeli Association of Physiotherapists	Yes	Yes	Private & public		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Period of supervised practice	Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	No	
Italy: Associazione Italiana Fisioterapisti (AIFI)	Yes	Yes	Private		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Period of CPD	Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	No	
Lebanon: Order of Physiotherapists in Lebanon	Yes	No	No		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		Not supportive	Don't know	Yes	No	
Liechtenstein: Physiotherapeuten Verband Furstentum Liechtenstein	Yes	Yes	Private	Private - not for pregnant women, accident victims and electrophysical therapies	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Period of supervised practice Period of CPD	Completely supportive	No	Yes	No	
Lithuania: Lithuanian Kinezitherapy Association	Yes	Yes	Private & public		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	No	
Luxembourg: Association Luxembourgeoise Des Kinesitherapeutes	Yes	No	Private *		No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Masters level	Limited support	No	Don't know	No	
Malta: Malta Association of Physiotherapists	No	Yes	Private		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Don't know	
Montenegro: Physiotherapists' Association of Montenegro	No	No	No		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Limited support	Don't know	Yes	No	
Netherlands: Koninklijk Nederlands Genootschap Voor Fysiotherapie	Yes	Yes	Private		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Norway: Norwegian Physiotherapist Association	Yes	Yes	Private		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Period of supervised practice	Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	No	

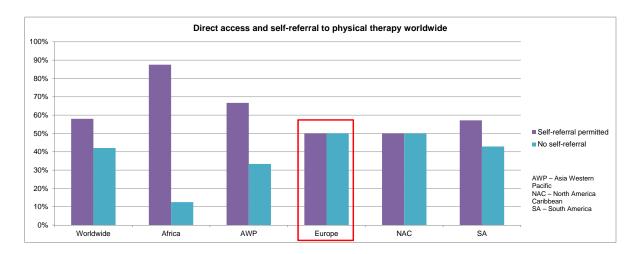
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WCPT Member Organisation:	National legislation present?	Can service users can refer themselves to PT without a medical/ physician referral?	Self-referral in public and/or private settings?	In the presence of self- referral are there limitations?	Are PTs permitted to assess?	Are PTs permitted to diagnose?	Are PTs permitted to treat?	Are PTs permitted to refer on to other specialties/ services?	Are PTs permitted to offer preventative advice?	Do the expected competencies of graduates from entry level physical therapy programmes prepare them to accept self-referrals on qualification?	Post- entry level education requirements for self-referral	Degree of support for direct access/self referral to physical therapy from MO		Public in favour of direct access/self- referral?	Doctors/ physicians in favour of direct access/self- referral?
Poland: Polish Society of Physiotherapy	Yes	No	Private *		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Masters level Specialisation	Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Don't know
Portugal: Associação Portugesa de Fisioterapeutas	Yes	Yes	Private		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	No
Romania: Roumanian Federation for Physiotherapy (FRAK)	No	Yes	Private & public		Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Is unsure	Don't know	Yes	No
Serbia: Association of Physiotherapists of Serbia	No	No	No		Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Period of supervised practice	Limited support	Don't know	Don't know	No
Slovenia: Slovenian Association of Physiotherapists	Yes	Yes	Private		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Limited support	Don't know	Yes	No
Spain: Asociación Española de Fisioterapeutas	Yes	No	Private *	Private - insurance companies require medical referral	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	No
Sweden: Legitimerade Sjukgymnasters Riksforbund	Yes	Yes	Private & public	Public - not to hospital and special care settings - this requires referral	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Don't know
Switzerland: Schweizer Physiotherapie Verband	Yes	No	Private *		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	Don't know
Syria: Syrian Physical Therapy Association	Yes	Yes	Private		Yes		Yes		Yes	No	Period of supervised practice Period of CPD Masters level	Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	No
Turkey: Turkish Physiotherapy Association	No	No	No		No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes		Limited support	Yes	Yes	Yes
United Kingdom: Chartered Society of Physiotherapy	Yes	Yes	Private & public	Private - insurance companies still require medical referral for reimbursement Public - in theory no, but local issues eg commissioning determine clinical areas covered	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	Yes

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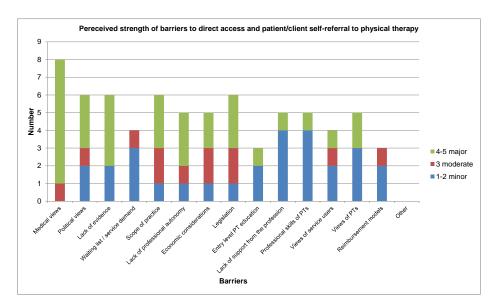


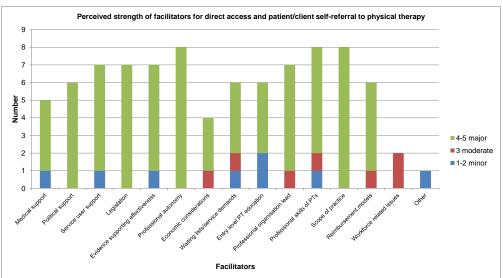


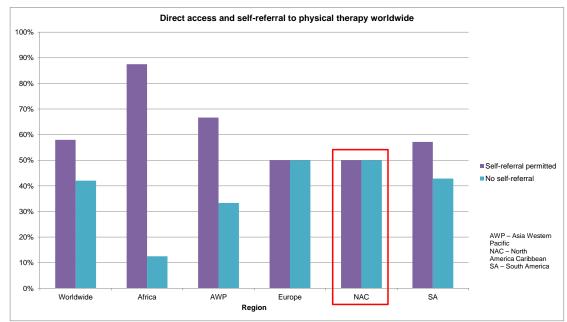
				Scope o	f practice					Educ	cation		Support for Self	-referral	
WCPT Member Organisation:	National legislation present?	Can service users can refer themselves to PT without a medical/ physician referral?	Self- referral in public and/or private settings?	In the presence of self-referral are there limitations?	Are PTs permitted to assess?	Are PTs permitted to diagnose?	Are PTs permitted to treat?	Are PTs permitted to refer on to other specialties/ services?	Are PTs permitted to offer preventative advice?	Do the expected competencies of graduates from entry level physical therapy programmes prepare them to accept self-referrals on qualification?	Post- entry level education requirements for self-referral	Degree of support for direct access/self referral to physical therapy from MO	Politicians/policy makers in favour of direct access/self- referral?	Public in favour of direct access/self- referral?	Doctors/ physicians in favour of direct access/self- referral?
Bahamas: Bahamas Association of Physiotherapists	Yes	No			Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Period of supervised practice Period of CPD Masters level	Limited support	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know
Canada: Canadian Physiotherapy Association	No	Yes	Private	Private - limitations relate primarily to reimbursement from insurance companies. Although there is no legislation restricting direct access, it is primarily people with musculoskeletal conditions or injuries that present themselves to PT directly. Individuals with other PT issues continue to be primarily referred through physician referral. Public - Canada Health Act positions physicians as the lead on patient care, including referral to PT services in the public system. There are some exceptions which relate more to the hospital rules, rather than legislation.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	Don't know
Guatemala: Asociacion Nacional de Fisioterapistas de Guatemala	No	Yes	Private		Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	No
Jamaica: Jamaica Physiotherapy Association	Yes	No	Private	Private - service users can self-refer to PTs, but neither the profession's Code of Ethics nor the law permits 'Treatment'. PTs who perform ergonomic assessments and who offer preventative advice are allowed to do so without a referral as the law does not precisely define that in the scope of treatment.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Limited support	Don't know	Yes	Don't know
Puerto Rico: Associacion Puertorriquena de Fisioterapia	Yes	No			No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	Yes
Suriname: Surinaamse Vereniging Voor Fysiotherapie	Yes	Yes	Private & public	Private - limitations on the number of treatments someone can receive in a year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Period of supervised practice Period of CPD	Completely supportive	Yes	Yes	No
Trinidad and Tobago: Physiotherapy Association of Trinidad and Tobago	Yes	No	Private *		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Limited support	No	Yes	No
United States of America: American Physical Therapy Association	Yes	Yes	Private & public	Private/public - majority of states allow legal recognition of self-referral to PTs in all settings, including in private practice. Insurance programs, both private practice. Insurance programs, both private practice. Insurance programs, both private and public, have varied degrees of recognition of self-referral for the purpose of payment of services. A few states prohibit self-referral for certain physical therapist intervention (manipulation, sharp debridement). Other immitations are prohibition of medical diagnosis, direct access for a limited time frame, mandated referral to a physician when patient presents outside the scope of physical therappy practice. All institutions in which PTs practice can have institution-based procedures that restrict self-referral to PT such as hospital by-laws. PTs can serve on primary care teams and serve as a primary entry into the health care delivery system; the US Department of Defense is one of the primary examples.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Yes	Don't know	Don't know

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				S	cope of practic	e				Edu	cation		Support for	Self-referral	
WCPT Member Organisation:	National legislation present?	Can service users can refer themselves to PT without a medical/ physician referral?	Self-referral in public and/or private settings?	In the presence of self- referral are there limitations?	Are PTs permitted to assess?	Are PTs permitted to diagnose?	Are PTs permitted to treat?	Are PTs permitted to refer on to other specialties/ services?	Are PTs permitted to offer preventative advice?	Do the expected competencies of graduates from entry level physical therapy programmes prepare them to accept self-referrals on qualification?	Post- entry level education requirements for self-referral	Degree of support for direct access/self referral to physical therapy from MO	makers in favour of direct	Public in favour of direct access/self- referral?	Doctors/ physicians in favour of direct access/self- referral?
Brazil: Associacao de Fisioterapeutas do Brasil	Yes	Yes	Private &	Private - insurance comanies may set limits on sessions Public- varies across regions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	No	Yes	Don't know
Chile: Colegio de Kinesiologos de Chile	Yes	No			Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Not supportive	Yes	Yes	No
Colombia: Asociacion Colombiana de Fisioterapia	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes						
Mexico: AsociaciÃ <sup>3</sup> n Mexicana de Fisioterapia	Yes	Yes	Private	Private - insurance companies don't allow patients to go directly to physical therapy treatment, they need a referral.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Completely supportive	Don't know	Yes	No
Peru: Asociacion Peruana De Terapistas Fisicos	No	No	Private *		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Limited support	Yes	Yes	No
Uruguay: Asociacion de Fisioterapeutas del Uruguay	No	Yes	Private		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					
Venezuela: Federacion Venezolana de Colegios de Fisioterapeutas	Yes	No			Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Period of supervised practice	Not supportive	Don't know	Yes	No

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