What does a physiotherapist do?

Kristy Bonanno
Physiotherapist
What is physiotherapy?

We provide services/interventions to individuals and populations to develop, maintain and restore maximum movement and functional ability.
What is physiotherapy?

We are primary healthcare practitioners

We can assess, diagnose and treat autonomously including ordering investigations, & some physiotherapists can prescribe medication.
What types of patients do we see?

- Paediatrics
- Elderly
- Neurological
- Post-surgical
- Women’s health
- Cardiopulmonary
- Musculoskeletal disorders
Where do we work?

- Acute setting: e.g. hospital
- Sub-acute setting: e.g. rehabilitation centre
- Community settings e.g. private clinics, home visits (NDIS participants, private patients, Medicare, Home Care Packages), Aged Care Facilities, Corporate settings, Workers Compensation
Whole Family Health

- Community setting – patients come to us
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) – paediatrics (mainly) and adults with a disability
- What do physio’s do in this setting?
International Classification of Functioning (ICF)
## Physiotherapy impairments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Neurological/genetic</th>
<th>Cardiorespiratory</th>
<th>Musculoskeletal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cerebral Palsy</td>
<td>• Spasticity</td>
<td>• Airway clearance issues</td>
<td>• Weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hypertonia (high tone)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tightness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coordination issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Contractures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Balance</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downs Syndrome</td>
<td>• Hypotonia (low tone)</td>
<td>• Congenital heart defects</td>
<td>• Hypermobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Restrictive upper respiratory tract</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorder</td>
<td>• Coordination issues (gross and fine motor)</td>
<td>• Poor CVS endurance</td>
<td>• Weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gross motor delays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Motor planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ataxic gait</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Physiotherapy impairments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Neurological/genetic</th>
<th>Cardiorespiratory</th>
<th>Musculoskeletal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Muscular dystrophy</strong></td>
<td>• Pain</td>
<td>• Airway clearance issues</td>
<td>• Scoliosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Breathing difficulties</td>
<td>• Weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tightness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower limb abnormalities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Talipes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Toe walking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Metatarsus adductus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pes planus (flat feet)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tightness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Dysfunctional movement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other conditions we assess & treat

- Gross motor developmental delay
- Fine motor developmental delay
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Developmental Coordination Disorder (dyspraxia)
- Intellectual disability
- Inherited genetic disorders e.g. Williams Syndrome, Fragile X syndrome
What things do we help with?

- Gross motor activities: walking, running, skipping, jumping, climbing, hopping
- Fine motor skills: gripping, object manipulation
- Functional activities: stairs, sports, self-care tasks
- Coordination issues
- Proprioception/depth perception
- Balance issues
- Motor control
- Endurance / exercise tolerance / stamina
- Airway clearance, maximising lung function
- Management of long-term conditions

If a child is not meeting their milestones, or not able to keep up with peers, we can help!
How do we do this?

We assess and intervene where necessary

- Prescribe assistive technology e.g. Ankle Foot Orthoses (AFOs), walking aids, compression clothing, electric scooters, night splints
- Intervention targeted at their impairments to help them achieve their functional goals e.g. abnormal walking due to quad weakness – target the quad weakness.
- Referral for other treatment options e.g. botox
- Advice and education for patients and their families/carers
How do we do this?

- Pain management
- Serial casting
- Chest physiotherapy
- Hydrotherapy
- Wheelchair prescription
- Manual therapy
- Exercise prescription
When to refer for physiotherapy?

- If the child is delayed in gross/fine motor skills (not meeting milestones)
- If the patient has pain
- If the parent reports the child falls often
- If the parent reports the child has trouble with certain functional activities e.g. stairs, skipping, jumping
- If the child is not walking with the appropriate walking pattern
- If the child has coordination or proprioceptive issues