

Using The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Among Physiotherapy Students

ANABELA C. MARTINS; L. SIMÕES

*ESTeSC, Rua 5 De Outubro, São Martinho do Bispo
Apt. 7006, 3040-997 Coimbra
Portugal*

PURPOSE: There is a need in Portugal for more regular and consistent information exchange on the WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) to improve communication between different users. Therefore it is a potential tool in education to raise the awareness of multiple components that influence human functioning, the ESTS - Coimbra has sponsored distinct efforts aimed at ICF dissemination in the four-years program of physiotherapy. The purpose of this presentation is sharing our experiences from the project during the years 2001-2004. **RELEVANCE:** The aim of this project has been to establish a common language and understanding for communication and registration of data related to the process of physiotherapy. Further to medical diagnosis, physiotherapists need terminology concerning the client's activities in every day life. ICF offers a client-centred and coherent view of different components (structures and functions, activities and participation and contextual factors). **DESCRIPTION:** The project has consisted of several studies: 1) translation of the main concepts of the ICF; 2) physiotherapy students familiarisation with the ICF; 3) epidemiological research and patients profiles (Alzheimer disease, Parkinson disease, osteoporosis, burns, AIDS, rheumatoid arthritis, temporomandibular disorder and spinal cord injury), using the terminology within the classification and the codes; 4) development of an assessment instrument relevant for patients in general; and 5) development of a measure for participation. The methods for reaching the goals have been lectures, study circles, tutorials, systematic reviews and research projects linking the ICF with existing literature about assessment and physiotherapy planning and outcome measures. **RESULTS:** Some of these studies were included in international research projects from the WHO Collaborating Center for FIC in Portuguese, São Paulo University, Brazil and from the ICF Research Branch German WHO-FIC, Munich University, Germany. According to our experiences, the positive perspective of functioning is the basis of the successful approach to the client and it enhances the rehabilitation process and the multiprofessional collaboration. **CONCLUSIONS:** ICF is an exemplar tool to be adapted to our needs as physiotherapists involved in clinical practice, research or education, used as a conceptual framework for curriculum design and promoting a successful transition into professional practice as newly-qualified physiotherapists. Students receiving ICF training today are the professional association members of tomorrow. The use of the model and the classification has enhanced the awareness of many factors that contribute to the human functioning. Finally, this project could open a debate on the development and evaluation of physiotherapy programmes world-wide, allowing us to learn more from other similar experiences.