

INPLASY

Code of ethics and evaluation of professionalism in physiotherapy. Protocol for a scoping review

INPLASY2024110084

doi: 10.37766/inplasy2024.11.0084

Received: 19 November 2024

Published: 20 November 2024

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - None.

Review Stage at time of this submission - Formal screening of search results against eligibility criteria.

Conflicts of interest - Paola Figueroa-González, Joel Guzmán, and Claudio Tapia are members of the Colegio de Kinesiólogos de Chile's current board. Ruvistay Gutiérrez-Arias and Máximo Escobar Cabello declare no conflicts of interest.

INPLASY registration number: INPLASY2024110084

Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 20 November 2024 and was last updated on 20 November 2024.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective To identify, analyze, and summarise the available evidence on the vital aspects or principles included in the various codes of ethics of the colleges, associations, or international organizations that bring together physiotherapists. Secondly, to locate and summarise the attributes, values, or behaviors declared by the different organizations of physiotherapists as essential for assessing the professionalism of their members, as well as the instruments used to evaluate this construct.

Background Human movement is the basis for practice, education, and research in physiotherapy. The object of study of physiotherapy, human movement, and function is the key to achieving optimal living for people. This goes beyond health;

it encompasses each person's participation in and contribution to society. To achieve this, physiotherapists must embrace their identity. Thus, developing their critical reasoning and acquiring clinical skills will be on the right track. However, the behavior of physiotherapists and their sense of responsibility towards their patients/clients, other professionals in the health care team, and the rest of society are fundamental and crucial to strengthening, consolidating, and further developing our profession. It is in this context that professional associations become relevant. Some essential purposes of professional associations are 1) regulation of the practice of professions, 2) institutional representation of members, and 3) defense of the interests of professional members. In addition, these organizations 4) seek to protect the interests of consumers or users of the services provided by monitoring the practices of their members.

Professional associations use different tools to achieve these objectives, with the code of ethics being a fundamental pillar in this task. There are various definitions of codes of ethics; however, they have similar characteristics, such as 1) being a written and formal document, 2) containing ethical guidelines and principles to be followed by members, and 3) having as their object the behavior or conduct of the professionals who are part of the organization.

However, having an up-to-date and robust code of ethics is only the beginning of regulating professional practice. Faced with this challenge is the concept of professionalism. While a code of ethics defines what should or should not be done, professionalism encompasses how the standards set out in the code of ethics are applied in daily practice, including attitudinal and personal behavioral aspects. Professionalism generally considers the attributes, behaviors, commitments, values, and goals that characterize a profession. Professionalism is a theoretical construct, so it is easier to describe in idealistic terms than through observable and measurable behaviors. However, different methodologies can allow for the assessment of this construct.

Rationale The recently assumed board of Colegio de Kinesiólogos de Chile has declared that one of its strategic axes and priority objectives during its mandate is updating the professional code of ethics. To accomplish this task, they will consider as a basis the ethical principles and responsibilities of physiotherapists and member organizations of World Physiotherapy (WP), an organization of which the Colegio de Kinesiólogos de Chile is a member. The WP expects its member organizations to 1) have a code of ethics or conduct, 2) publish, promote, and disseminate their code of ethics or conduct for the benefit of their members, the general public, employers, governments, and government agencies, and 3) ensure that the association has procedures to monitor the practice of its members whose practice is not under their code of ethics or conduct.

METHODS

Strategy of data synthesis We will search the electronic databases MEDLINE (Ovid), Embase (Ovid), AMED (Ovid), Emcare (Ovid), CINAHL (EBSCOhost), and LILACS (BVS) for studies from the origin of each database until October 2024. We will initially design the search strategy for MEDLINE (Ovid) and then adapt it to the other databases according to their characteristics. We will use a combination of controlled (MeSH,

Emtree, CINAHL Subject Headings, DeCS, as appropriate) and natural language to create search phrases for the population (kinesiología, physical therapy, physiotherapy) and the concept (code of ethics, professionalism). The search strategy will not be limited by language, state, or publication date.

In addition, we will examine available codes of ethics from World Physiotherapy member societies or organizations. For this, we will review each society's website via the link at <https://world.physio/our-members>.

Eligibility criteria We will include studies that have reported on aspects related to the code of ethics or values contained in the professionalism (concept) of different colleges, associations, or organizations of kinesiologists, physiotherapists, or physical therapists (population), according to the denomination of each country. We will not consider the context in which the studies were conducted as an eligibility criterion.

We exclude studies that have focused on aspects related to professionalism or those that have addressed issues related to the code of ethics of other professionals or disciplines, such as physical therapy assistants or occupational therapists.

Source of evidence screening and selection A researcher will select studies. First, he or she will review the titles and abstracts of the records identified by our electronic search strategy. At this stage, we will discard irrelevant records. Next, he or she will review the full texts of potentially eligible studies. A second investigator will check the final inclusion of studies. For this screening process, we will use the Rayyan web application.

Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence The unit of analysis for this first evidence synthesis will be 1) the codes of ethics and 2) the values of professionalism. Studies that met our eligibility criteria will be used to identify the codes of ethics of specific societies or organizations.

Presentation of the results The results were presented in narrative form, accompanied by tables and figures.

Language restriction None.

Country(ies) involved Chile.

Other relevant information None.

Keywords Codes of Ethics; Professionalism; Kinesiology; Physical Therapy; Physiotherapy.

Dissemination plans The results of this scoping review will be published in one or more articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Contributions of each author

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