



THE ETHICAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PHYSIOTHERAPISTS IN POLAND

THE OATH

Being grateful to my teachers and masters with all my respect I accept the title of a physiotherapist and I make a vow to:

1. respect the rights and dignity of every patient
2. respect all the regulations of physiotherapy activities
3. give honestly services which can reduce the degree of suffering and ailment and prevent illnesses
4. take legal, professional and moral responsibilities for physiotherapy activities
5. support and participate in the knowledge and skills which are related to health needs of the society
6. protect the dignity of physiotherapists

Physiotherapist- a female or male with an occupation of a physiotherapist

UNIT 1

GENERAL PART

Art. 1 The ethical rules of physiotherapists are strongly related to the ethical rules of proper relations and acting among people and to the surrounding world. They make a physiotherapist obey patient's rights and care for high status of the occupation.

Art.2 The physiotherapist's activity is to give conscious and planned professional services to patients, regardless their health condition, social status or personal beliefs.

Art. 3 At work, the physiotherapist regards patient's well-being as the most important above all the goods.

Art. 4 The services in physiotherapy are given the basis of medical diagnosis and all contraindications from the health condition of the patient

Art.5 The physiotherapist's activities cannot be illegal or be harmful to human health.

Art. 6 The physiotherapist's duty is to constantly develop, both personally and professionally, and the qualifications should result from their actual level of knowledge.

Art.7 The relations between physiotherapists are the result of values and goals shared, respect of each other and are based on the social awareness of the status of the job.

Art.8 Physiotherapists give the society truthful information about physiotherapy and its services.

Art.9 The ethical rules of physiotherapy occupation have priority before other rules connected with business, being an employee, administration needs, social pressures, market mechanisms and others.

UNIT II

DETAILED PART

RELATIONS WITH PATIENTS

Art.10 Patients have the right to get physiotherapy services, regardless his age, sex, race, nationality, ethnical origin, religion, skin colour, sexual orientation, health condition, political views, property, marital status etc.

Art.11 Patients have the right to have their personal dignity, privacy, individual sensibilities respected and the relations with physiotherapist are based on mutual trust.

Art. 12 In case of an emergency the patient has the right to be given first aid by the physiotherapist.

Art.13 Physiotherapists must not disclose any information about the patient and their surroundings to third party, without their consent or knowledge, except when required by law. Death of a patient is not an excuse to release the information about them.

Art. 14 Revealing information about the patient's health to another physiotherapist or a doctor to get the consultation is not a disclosure of official secrets.

Art.15 Patients have the right to appropriate objective truthful and understandable information about their condition and about suggested physiotherapy procedures so that they can participate in decisions about their physiotherapy care.

Art.16 Patients have the right not to give their consent for proposed physiotherapy procedures.

Art.17 Patients have the right not to be given information about their health condition or physiotherapy procedures.

Art.18 Patients have the right to choose a physiotherapist, who cannot object if they need a second opinion.

UNIT III

RELATIONS WITH SOCIETY

Art.19 Physiotherapists shall participate in public educational programmes connected with their profession.

Art.20 Physiotherapists shall contribute to the just division and development of health services.

Art.21 Physiotherapists shall be aware and responsible for the prevention conducted, and shall not popularize anti-health manners.

Art.22 Physiotherapists, according to their knowledge and competence, shall participate in reducing symptoms of social pathologies.

Art.23 Physiotherapists have the right to individual feelings and to receive assistance in providing physiotherapy services.

UNIT IV

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Art.24 Physiotherapists are obliged to provide their services under any circumstances. These shall not endanger the safety and professionalism of the services.

Art.25 Physiotherapists shall not go beyond their competence and skills while providing services.

Art.26 In case a patient decides to undergo the treatment, the physiotherapist shall conduct an estimation resulting in functional diagnosis. On the basis of the information gathered, the physiotherapist shall plan and proceed with adequate services.

Art. 27 When the objects have been accomplished or they are not possible to be secured, the physiotherapist shall inform the patient and shall stop giving their services.

Art. 28 If the functional examination result is not explicit or the required conduct is beyond the physiotherapist's abilities, the physiotherapist shall inform the patient and they shall be referred to more suitably qualified colleagues or relevant persons.

Art. 29 Physiotherapists shall use only scientific methods. They must not co-operate with persons who do not have proper qualifications.

Art. 30 Physiotherapists shall know current standards in physiotherapy and lead their conduct according to them.

Art. 31 Physiotherapists have the right to refuse to provide a service if, in their opinion, it can endanger patient's health.

Art.32 Physiotherapists have the right to refuse any serious or biomedical experiments that are inconsistent with ethical norms.

Art.33 While working, physiotherapist shall not be intoxicated or dazed.

Art. 34 Physiotherapists have the right to work in such working conditions which guarantee the best care for a patient.

Art.35 Having decided to participate in an organized form of strike, a physiotherapist shall not refuse to give their services if the strike can endanger patient's health.

Art.36 A physiotherapist- employer is obliged to

- a) control whether their employees have proper qualifications
- b) follow current rules and procedures for management and services, especially appropriate standards of personnel management
- c) monitor adequate rules and management and service procedures as well as the functioning of the establishment
- d) provide the personnel with possibilities of further education and development of their skills.

Art.37 Physiotherapists shall have regard for their job, protect its status and act in the way that provides respect and confidence.

Art. 38 Physiotherapists shall take care of their own physical and mental health so as not to confine their abilities but to give example to patients.

Art.39 Physiotherapists have the right to be well paid for their services as stated in the job contracts.

Art.40 Physiotherapists shall accomplish their professional status only on the basis of the effects of their work.

Art.41 Physiotherapists shall only use those professional or scientific qualifications which are adequate to their education.

Art.42 Physiotherapists shall not, in front of a patient, bring discredit on a doctor's conduct, another physiotherapist and the medical staff. The remarks about the inappropriate or unethical behaviour shall be delivered to the very doctor or physiotherapist and, if not accepted, they shall make efforts to refer the evidence to the relevant authorities, such as Doctors Local Council or Polish Physiotherapy Association.

Art.43. Physiotherapists who work for an institution entitled to control physiotherapy establishments shall obey all ethical rules in this Code.

Art.44 A physiotherapist's unethical behaviour shall be revealed and referred to Main Colleagues Court of Polish Physiotherapy Association. The negative opinion can be issued only when relevant authorities require it in a written form.

Art. 45 The physiotherapists who is a member of Polish Physiotherapy Association and has been sentenced by court for a crime or has been sued by a patient, shall inform the Headquarters of Polish Physiotherapy Association about these facts.

Art. 46 Physiotherapists shall support high quality education in academic and clinical settings and personally become the best example to follow.

CONSTANT EDUCATION

Art.47 To provide patients with the highest quality of service physiotherapists have the right and duty to educate themselves constantly and to follow the latest scientific achievements in physiotherapy.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Art.48 Physiotherapists have the right to conduct their private business following the ethic rules of the Code.

Art.49 Physiotherapists shall honestly inform the patient about the range and kind of their services in order to enable the patient to make decision whether to use their services or not.

Art.50 Physiotherapists shall be guided by the principles of fair competition in business, concerning their contacts with suppliers, manufacturers etc., and follows the principles of market mechanisms.

Art.51 Physiotherapists shall never use their name to advertize goods and services if it offends their dignity and competence.

Art.52 Physiotherapists shall not benefit from the cooperation with medical industry representatives since it can upset the objectivism of their professional opinions, and thus undermine trust to their profession.

Art.53 Physiotherapists shall not use any pressure to gain personal benefits and the payment for services given must be reasonably thought over.

UNIT V

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Art.54 Physiotherapists shall support the scientific research, which lead to raising the level of services.

Art.55 The physiotherapist who takes part in scientific research shall comply with the rules of conducting the research including

- a) the patient's consent
- b) confidentiality of patient's records
- c) patient's safety and welfare
- d) the respect of the copyright
- e) complete transparency of support sources

Art.56 Physiotherapists shall take part in activities at science societies.

Art.57 Physiotherapists is obliged to share the results of their research, especially in scientific magazines and during conferences.

Art.58 Scientific publications and presentations should be reliable.

Art.59 Physiotherapists are obliged to obtain patient's, or their legal representative consent, for taking part in presentations.

Art.60 Physiotherapists are obliged to keep the person being presented anonymous.

Art.61 The research experiment with a person shall be described in details as a project and submitted to the bioethical committee to be accepted.

Art.62 Physiotherapists shall obey the copyright in scientific publications and the usage of clinical material for the scientific research requires consent of the clinic manager.

Art.63 Physiotherapists shall reveal connections with companies to the scientific publishing houses and lecture's listeners.

Art.64 The physiotherapist who participates in research sponsored by medicine or equipment manufacturers must be sure that the research is conducted according to the rules of ethics.

UNIT VI

COOPERATION WITH OTHER PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN THE TREATMENT

Art.65 Physiotherapists shall collaborate with the doctor tending the patient.

Art.66 Physiotherapists have the right to expect cooperation and help from other physiotherapists.

Art.67 The physiotherapist, who participates in visits and other techniques of estimating work experience, cannot reveal its results without the leading physiotherapist consent.

Art.68 Physiotherapists shall help the colleagues who start their career and create the sense of responsibility, reliability, diligence and accuracy.

Art.69 Physiotherapists shall help their less experienced colleagues, especially in hard cases.

Art.70 Physiotherapists shall help their employees according to the rules of ethics, take care of working conditions and the professional development of their employees.

Art.71 Physiotherapists shall cooperate with other physiotherapists and with representatives of other medical professions dealing with diagnostics and therapy.

Art.72 Mutual relations should be based on respect, collegueship and responsibility. Special respect and acknowledgement should be paid to senior physiotherapists and former teachers.

Art.73 Mutual assessment of physiotherapists must be fair and the conclusions must be impartial and should be submitted to the physiotherapist involved first of all.

Art.74 Expressing a negative opinion among physiotherapists is acceptable only in the presence of the person involved. The opinion cannot be close to libel and must be in a written form.

UNIT VII

FINAL REMARKS

In cases not enlisted in the Ethics Code of Physiotherapist of the Republic of Poland, physiotherapist shall act according to the rules of Colleagues' Court in Polish Physiotherapy Society Headquarters , or local divisions' resolutions or according to generally accepted customs.

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COMMENTS - I

Nowadays the word *ethics* can arise certain doubts, even reluctance or indignation in many people's minds. Only few accept this word with approval. This is how I feel having observed people. However, both human and social lives are based on certain rules and standards, which direct people's actions. People's proper proceedings according to standards in force lead to mutual esteem, social development and sense of security.

Why does the word *ethics* arise certain anxiety? It is because it touches our feelings and interferes with human independence.

The temptation of feeling absolutely independent is really strong. Freedom does not want to be limited. However, life is a constant choice. The aim of any choice should be human dignity. The fact that man is a being above all the other creatures, standing out and at the same time equal in their dignity with every other man, is rediscovered through the human's mind efforts and you find it in philosophy and theology.

Man, in his freedom, chooses ethical rules to follow. Through those choices man reveals his\her humanity to themselves and to others. Not only does man reveal themselves but also influences other people. Thus ethical rules acquire a specific meaning when in direct relations with another person. Into such direct relations enter people of medical professions. It is called duty relation, since patients, because of their poor health, need help from the ones who have declared to help others.

It is good that Physiotherapy Ethical Code has been created. It is very good that it was physiotherapists who did it. The main idea of The Code is the first vow of THE OATH *To respect the rights and dignity of every patient.*

You can find out how to do it on the pages of the Code. The Code is not a set of law rules but a collection of ethical standards restricting adequate behaviour and conduct of a physiotherapist. The document is to help physiotherapist to develop their own sensitivity and personal responsibility for the patient. The content of Unit I and II show a thorough care for the patients. He\she is in the centre of physiotherapist actions. And patient, their dignity, is the one who is writing the Code. Patient's welfare, the esteem towards their dignity, and their health are the targets and the main values marking the work and life qualities of physiotherapist. The character of physiotherapist job is very close to that of a doctor's. One can say that the jobs belong to one job- family. The following units, seven in all, show the everyday life reality, the reality of physiotherapist life. He\ she does not live an isolated life. He\she lives in family, professional,

urban, national societies. The Code shows important relations with some of these societies. Patient's welfare makes physiotherapist take care of high standards at work, which implies constant learning and working on one's character.

Article 1 expresses it in the best way, *'The ethical rules of physiotherapists are strongly related to the ethical rules of proper relations and acting among people and to the surrounding world. They make a physiotherapist obey patient's rights and care for high status of the occupation.'* The Code makes it clear that it is hard to live without rules and ethical standards. If you reject some you must create new ones. Today in the professional ethics standards enters

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IN POLAND. Let physiotherapists experience great satisfaction from their job, let them feel and enjoy great esteem of the society. Let patients have the most satisfaction, too.

ks. dr Marian Florczyk
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COMMENTS - II

Starry skies above me and moral law inside me

Immanuel Kant

Each evaluation tells us more about the one who evaluates than about the one who is being evaluated. This applies both to employers and those who should obey the rules. Philosophers already distinguished ethics from morality in ancient times. Theory from practice. Another distinction was the opposition between law and ethics. A saying goes, 'A bird watcher doesn't have to know how to fly'. Thus you can be an excellent deontologist and a very immoral person at the same time or you can be an honest man who is completely ignorant of ethics. The need for a code arises in such case.

Two questions come to mind, 'why' and 'what for?'. Let us stress the importance of the second one, 'what for?'. Deontology, as professional ethics is, in its essence, a unique conjunction of morality and law. We believe that each professional code, even in its hidden intention - assumes dishonesty or exceeding the rules allowed by conscience. But in case of physiotherapists, is profession code really needed? Isn't it a kind of a hypersensitive prevention? I believe it is not. Contemporary axiology crisis has created an atmosphere for changing the quality of qualities, where normality is explained before abnormality and abnormality is treated as a standard. The Physiotherapy Code is for the physiotherapist graduates a determinant of their professional and moral actions. Thus it deserves the highest appreciation as it shows the sense of interpersonal relations, mostly between a physiotherapist (a man) and a patient (a man). In both cases absolute esteem for human dignity is the fundamental quality. It is worth considering what is peculiar to the profession of a physiotherapist. A question should be asked - where and what are the limits of freedom and what is the responsibility of a physiotherapist ?

Following discussions and arguments of deontologists I would like to stress and remind the distinction between 'the ethics of shame' and 'the ethics of conscience'. The first one assumes that man is bad by nature. This assumption is the basis of metaphysics to create law. It states man's almost prenatal fault. The second one, based on conscience, trusts man. It cites Socrates and his thesis that man is good by nature. This notion accepts, if necessary, the comment of Jean Jacques Rousseau that it is people who make man bad. It definitely separates from Ovidiusz and his interpretation of Socrates's words. He claimed that

despite the man's knowledge about what is good it is evil that more appeals to man. We would like to stress that current arguments about professional ethics rather apply to pedagogics. The point is that modern education theories stress indoctrination in the process of education. Thus, pupil's entelechy (vocation) is forgotten. It results in the repressiveness of deontology. It was Immanuel Kant, the Enlightenment philosopher, who objected to both 'the ethics of intention' and 'the ethics of result'. According to him, it is neither important what a man intended to do nor what a man did, in spite of their intention.

Ethics assumes independence and responsibility. The main thesis of deontology should imply that not all of us are suspicious, not all of us are dishonest, not all of us are guilty! Thus, deontology is a specific challenge which calls for a conscious choice of a job. If you decide to start that kind of education and job, remember about your future duties. First of all, come back to Hipocrates's motto: PRIMUM NON NOCERE

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