

Physiotherapy in Mental Health: Challenges for the Future

Probst, Michel

Professor at the KU Leuven, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences. Head of the research unit Adapted Physical Activity & Psychomotor Rehabilitation and coordinator of the studies “Rehabilitation Sciences in Mental Health Care, Belgium, KU Leuven

Abstract

After 16 years, it is time to think about the future directions of physiotherapy in mental health. Due to the fast-changing needs in our society, the expiration date of persons, ideas, and products becomes shorter and shorter and new challenges are coming up. For years, I have argued for the profession to break out of its self-imposed shackles. The biggest challenges in clinical practice, research and education will be the integration of physiotherapy with transdisciplinary health care approach based on the integrative health care or collaborative governance models. ‘Integrative health care’ aims for well-coordinated care among different providers and institutions by bringing conventional and complementary approaches together to care for the whole person. ‘Collaborative governance’ builds on mutual interdependencies, shared responsibilities and co-production of goals and strategies by partners in a network. Surely the question will be ‘Which health care provider has the best competences, knowledge and skills to give the best evidence-based treatment for the needs, preferences and interest of the person who is asking for help?’ These emerging ideas of cooperation will influence our profession. The borders will fade. Different other health professionals will use our key-elements. Instead of complaining, physiotherapists working in mental health need to cope with the changing roles, to pull the same rope and to work on a clear ‘brand identity’ using the existing evidence-based practice and research. These challenges need to be more integrated into physiotherapy training programs (entry level and specialized training).

