

Risks in Physiotherapy Practice

Identifying Risks

Patient safety relies on more than good clinical care. The first step in analyzing risks in practice is to recognize and define potential risks to patients. This graph outlines some of the more common risks in PT practice. Use the list to assist in identifying risks in your practice. Note that while this is specific to PT practice, it is not exhaustive.

HUMAN

- Patient e.g. ability to communicate, cognition, balance, complexity of condition, stress, anxiety, pain
- Physiotherapist e.g. knowledge, skill, judgment, experience and stress level; ability to communicate; adequacy of record keeping; the ability to monitor, observe, and act etc
- Team e.g. culture, communication, competence, trust, willingness to collaborate, etc

EQUIPMENT

- The equipment itself e.g.
 acupuncture needles, therapy
 bands and balls, electrotherapy
 modalities, mobility devices etc
- How it is used e.g. proper maintenance and sterilization; adherence to established protocols; suitability for a particular patient etc

OTHER

- Biological
- Chemical
- Electrical
- Fire
- Financial

CLINICAL TECHNIQUES

- The technique
 itself e.g. spinal manipulation,
 tracheal suctioning, resisted
 exercises, lifts, transfers, ambulation etc
- How it is used e.g. level of supporting evidence, experience in performing, suitability for a particular patient, adherence to established protocols etc

ENVIRONMENT

- Outside the patient care area e.g. walkways, steps, railings, waiting rooms, elevators, washrooms etc
 - Inside the patient care area e.g. surfaces, lighting, waste disposal or sharps management, workload demands, pace of change, availability of resources and information etc

Once practice risks
have been identified,
a systematic analysis
of each risk can be
conducted to understand
the nature and level of risk.
A full understanding of what,
where, when, why and how is
necessary in order to appropriately
manage each risk.