

Framework for Specialization in Physical Therapy

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Abstract

Specialization is an integral, regulated element in the medical and nursing professions in Israel at the postgraduate level, but not in physical therapy. The Health Professions Regulation Law of 2008, which was passed in the Israeli Parliament over a decade ago, regulates the health care professions, including physical therapy. Section 16 of this law refers to the subject of professional specialization. Accordingly, in 2012, the High Council for Physical Therapy, which includes representatives from all professional institutions and organizations - the Ministries of Health, Welfare and Education, the Physical Therapy Society, the Association for the Advancement of Physical Therapy in Israel, health management organizations, medical centers, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and academic institutions - decided to create a Specialization Committee to prepare a framework for professional expertise in physical therapy. The objective was to create a framework/pathway for personal professional development of physical therapists and to enhance the status of the profession in

the multi-professional medical community as well as in clients' perception. The framework was submitted to the Director General of the Ministry of Health by the High Council for Physical Therapy in Israel. The Physical Therapy Specialization Committee acted concurrently with similar committees in 3 other health professions - occupational therapy, speech therapy, and nutrition - in a collaborative process, resulting in the formulation of an accepted framework for all four professions.

The objectives of this paper are: 1. To describe the main elements of the specialization framework/pathway, 2. To compare this framework to specialization processes in physical therapy in other countries, 3. To present issues that require reconsideration and to encourage discussion among the professionals. A joint discussion among representatives of the various institutions, organizations, and the clinical field will clarify the issues and enable formulation of an optimal framework tailored to the needs of physical therapists, patients, and the systems in which the professionals practice.

Keywords: Health Professions Regulation Law, Expertise, Specialization, Growth engine