

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# How do Patients, Politicians, Physiotherapists and Other Health Professionals View Physiotherapy Research in Switzerland? A Qualitative Study<sup>†</sup>

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## Abstract

**Background.** Since 2002, the professional education for Swiss physiotherapists has been upgraded to a tertiary educational level. With this change, the need for research related to professional practice has become more salient. The elaboration of research priorities is seen as a possible way to determine the profession's needs, to help coordinate research collaborations and to address expectations regarding physiotherapy. There is still limited evidence about stakeholders' views with regard to physiotherapy research. The objective of this study was to investigate key stakeholders' opinions about research in physiotherapy in Switzerland. **Methods.** Focus groups with patients, health professionals, researchers and representatives of public health organizations were conducted, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with politicians, health insurers and medical doctors from three linguistic regions in Switzerland. An interview guide was elaborated. Data were transcribed and analysed using inductive content analysis (Atlas-ti 6<sup>®</sup>). **Results.** Eighteen focus groups and 23 interviews/written commentaries included 134 participants with various research experiences and from different settings. Fourteen categories were defined reflecting three themes: identity, interdisciplinarity and visibility. Stakeholders had positive views about the profession and perceived physiotherapists' important role now and in the future. Yet, they also felt that physiotherapy was not sufficiently recognized in society and not visible enough. A stronger professional identity would be key to enhancing interdisciplinary work. **Conclusions.** Results of this qualitative study provide insights into key aspects for moving the physiotherapy profession forward. Identity is at the heart of physiotherapy, not necessarily in terms of research priorities but in the definition of domains of competence and future positioning. Identity is also tightly connected to Interdisciplinarity as this might threaten the existence of the profession. Stakeholders outside the profession insist on the importance of visibility. The results of this study can help stakeholders reflect on the future of physiotherapy and elaborate research priorities. © 2013 The Authors. Physiotherapy Research International published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

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