



O6

Building bridges between guidelines and clinical practice in the allied health professions

Pierre Trudelle, Christian Boissier, Marielle Lafont
French National Authority for Health, Saint-Denis, France

Background: The implementation of practice guidelines by allied health professionals has been severely handicapped in France by the absence of a professional body that can diffuse and explain the guidelines to practitioners. Fewer than 10% of allied health professionals are members of specialty societies. A national council of physiotherapists and podiatrists representing the professions was set up in 2006. It encourages continuing professional development (CPD) and continuous quality improvement.

Purpose: To train physiotherapists and podiatrists who will test the implementation of CPD initiatives at a national level.

Methods: 110 physiotherapists pilot tested a clinical audit method in 2005. The topics were functional assessment of stroke victims and the work-up of patients suffering from neck pain. In 2006, the newly created national council selected and trained 44 professionals (physiotherapists and podiatrists) in 5 CPD methods (peer review groups, shared care networks, clinical audit, morbidity-mortality reviews, and clinical pathways) during the course of 3 seminars. The trainees have to construct CPD programmes for implementation across France.

Results: During the pilot test of clinical audits, 46 physiotherapists analysed 373 patient records and were able to build practice improvement plans focussing on their weak points. At the time of writing, over 10 CPD programmes have been drafted by the 44 trainees for testing in 22 regions in 2009-2010. The physiotherapists have tended to choose programmes based on peer review groups and shared care networks, and the podiatrists have preferred programmes based on clinical audits.

Discussion: Physiotherapists have developed a larger body of practice guidelines (>400) than podiatrists (about 20). Their choice of CPD method seems to reflect a greater distrust of standardisation of manual practice than expressed by podiatrists. The way allied health professionals choose to implement Evidence-Based Practice may be influenced by their experience, availability, and the maturity of evaluation in their field.