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Original Citation

Flynn, Jonathan (2015) Choose the right physiotherapist. *Train*, 16. pp. 60-61.

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How to choose your Physiotherapist if you have a Musculoskeletal/Sporting Injury

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Introduction

You have been training hard and your starting to get a niggle which if left unattended might well develop into a much bigger problem. The thing is how do you evaluate which Physiotherapist to see?

‘Physiotherapist’ or **‘Physical Therapist’** is a protected title and has been since July 2003 in the United Kingdom (UK), however that does not stop some people calling themselves physio’s or advertising in such a way that its difficult for the uninitiated from telling the difference. All physiotherapists in the UK go through a degree program which is full time, accelerated or part time and pretty tough going regardless of the route. They develop cognitive as well as practical experience and over the training period gather over a 1000hrs of practice working with all sorts of illnesses and conditions. They are trained to look at an injury from a biomechanical, pathological and anatomical basis.

Below are 3 easy steps for you to ensure you see the right person.

Step 1 – Check they are who they say they are

Physiotherapists work in both the National Health Service (NHS) and private practice, many of them do both. The easiest way to check you are seeing a properly qualified Physiotherapist is to check their credentials on the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) website. It is a legal requirement in the UK that all Physiotherapists regardless of where they work are on this register. The site has quick access for the public and can be found here at: <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/check/>

Step 2 – Understanding how Physiotherapists specialise

Following qualification its normal like any job to have a form of internship, this might follow many different routes but essentially it’s a time when a newly qualified Physiotherapist consolidates all their learning and starts to build on specialist post graduate learning both from the written literature and from what I term, **‘through put’**. You cannot beat seeing lots and lots of patients, Maslow, an educational psychologist would suggest this is how we cement of learning and our approach. Therefore, like anything in life you really want to be seeing someone who has not only notched up time served but has done something with it. Physiotherapists work in all different fields and you really want to ensure you are seeing someone who has specialised in

'musculoskeletal' or 'sports injuries/rehabilitation' if its musculoskeletal or sporting injury. Incidentally having a load of 'bums on seats' certificates does not make you a specialist. You need to be looking out for accredited specific qualification awarded under examination. Examples includes:

- British Association of Sport & Exercise Medicine (BASEM), Diploma in sport & Exercise medicine - <http://www.basem.co.uk/education/>
- Musculoskeletal Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (MACP), certificate, diploma or masters in manual therapy - <https://macpweb.org/home/>
- Society of Musculoskeletal Medicine (SOMM), diploma or masters in musculoskeletal medicine - <http://www.sommcourses.org/course-categories/msc-musculoskeletal-medicine>
- The McKenzie Institute, A-D modules & accreditation examination - <http://mckenzieinstitute.co.uk/education-and-courses/>

There are others, what's important here is the Physiotherapist you choose has as a minimum at least 5 years experience behind them, specific accredited post graduate qualifications and a track record in the field of musculoskeletal or sports medicine/rehabilitation.

Step 3 – Contextual experience

The last key thing is to examine the context of the experience. What I mean by this is the individual you are choosing to see needs to understand the sport you participate in. For example if they have no personal experience of or haven't spent time with or exploring how injuries occur in running, cycling, MMA, crossfit or Strongman then there probably not the right person to see. Look for additional qualifications such as British Weightlifting (BWL) coaching qualifications or United Kingdom Strength & Conditioning (UKSCA) coaching qualifications. If they have these, they will certainly have a keen eye and arguably a more contextual understanding.

British Weightlifting (BWL) - <http://britishweightlifting.org/>

United Kingdom Strength & Conditioning - <http://www.uk sca.org.uk/uk sca/>

Conclusion

Like anything you pay for what you get in life, good Physiotherapy isn't cheap but neither is a new pair of training shoes, don't skimp and be prepared to pay an average of £40-60 for an initial assessment and around £30-40 for follow up treatment sessions. Its money well spent!