

# Evidence of Barriers to Evidence-Based Physiotherapy Practice in Central Africa

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## ABSTRACT

Physiotherapists are responsible for assessment, planning, and implementation of rehabilitative programmes. Being part of medical team, it becomes important for them to use research findings in their practice. Evidence-Based-Physiotherapy practice is gaining attention across the globe. However, there are still barriers that hinder its practice. This mini-review explores recorded evidence of barriers to evidence-based-physiotherapy practice in the central African countries.

**Keywords:** Physiotherapy, Research, Barriers, Evidence-Based-Physiotherapy, Evidence-Based-Practice, Central Africa

## INTRODUCTION

According to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), “the physiotherapists assess, plan, and implement rehabilitative programmes that improve or restore human motor functions, maximize movement ability, relieve pain syndromes, and treat or prevent physical challenges associated with injuries, diseases and other impairments. They apply a broad range of physical therapies and techniques such as movement, ultrasound, heating, laser, and other techniques.”<sup>[1]</sup> Physiotherapists have different titles in different countries, e.g., in the central African countries, they are also called Kinésithérapeute. Healthcare is moving towards Evidence-Based-Medicine (EBM), and physiotherapy is no different. Hung et

al. analyzed more than 50 years of publication data to uncover research trends in Evidence-Based-Medicine. They found that there was continuous growth in higher-quality research methodologies.<sup>[2]</sup>

## EVIDENCE-BASED-PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) has defined evidence-based-physiotherapy as “a commitment to use the best available evidence to inform decision-making about the care of individuals that involves integrating physiotherapist practitioners and individual professional judgement with evidence gained through systematic research.”<sup>[3]</sup> This definition by WCPT was inspired by the evidence-based medicine’s definition given by Sackett et al.<sup>[4]</sup> The World Confederation for Physical Therapy has made several recommendations to its member organizations (MO) to improve the evidence-based-physiotherapy practice. Hence, the active presence of physiotherapy organizations in countries and regions is crucial for better research participation by physiotherapists.<sup>[3]</sup>

## BARRIERS TO EVIDENCE-BASED PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE IN CAMEROON

Cameroon is located in Central Africa, near the confluence of the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. Chad borders on the north; the Central

African Republic on the east; Congo, Gabon; Equatorial Guinea on the south; and Nigeria on the west. <sup>[5]</sup> The physiotherapists in Cameroon are also referred to as Kinésithérapeute. The physiotherapists in Cameroon have formed their national organization, the Cameroon Society of Physiotherapy. In 2021, the Cameroon Society of Physiotherapy reported a membership of 150 physiotherapists and an estimated 400 practicing physiotherapists. <sup>[6]</sup> However, their website reported 250+ members. <sup>[7]</sup> A Cameroonian researcher Ngeh EN, attributed the poor undergraduate research to poor research infrastructure, poor study facilities, lack of proper mentorship, late introduction of students to the research process, lack of funding and promotion, and lack of journals. <sup>[8]</sup> No other publication has yet focused on the research participation of physiotherapists in Cameroon.

### **BARRIERS TO EVIDENCE-BASED PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

Formerly known as Zaire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a huge country in central Sub-Saharan Africa currently known as DR Congo, DRC, DROC, Congo-Kinshasa, or simply the Congo. Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are the nations that border the DRC. <sup>[9]</sup> The professional title of the physiotherapist in DRC is Kinésithérapeute. The physiotherapists in DRC have formed their national organization - Union des Kinésithérapeutes du Congo (English-Congo Physical Therapists Union). In 2021, The Union des Kinésithérapeutes dugo had reported a membership of 300 physiotherapists. However, there are an estimated 1,200 practicing physiotherapists in the country. <sup>[10]</sup> However, no publications have reported the barriers to evidence-

based-physiotherapy practice in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

### **BARRIERS TO EVIDENCE-BASED PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE IN CONGO REPUBLIC-BRAZZAVILLE**

The Congo Republic, often known as Congo-Brazzaville, the Congo Republic, or simply Congo or the Congo, is a country on Central Africa's western coast. Gabon borders the country on the west, Cameroon on the northwest, the Central African Republic on the northeast, the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the southeast, the Angolan exclave of Cabinda on the south, and the Atlantic Ocean on the southwest. <sup>[11]</sup> There is no publication found that talks about the barriers to evidence-based physiotherapy practice in the Republic of the Congo. There is no known independent physiotherapy council or association in the Republic of the Congo. Such lack of organization might be why there is no publication regarding the research participation of physiotherapists based in the Republic of the Congo.

### **BARRIERS TO EVIDENCE-BASED PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

Central Africa's Central African Republic is a landlocked country. It is bordered on the north by Chad, on the northeast by Sudan, on the southeast by South Sudan, on the south by the Democratic Republic of Congo, on the southwest by the Republic of Congo, and on the west by Cameroon. <sup>[12]</sup> No publication talks about the barriers to evidence-based physiotherapy practice in the Central African Republic. There is no known independent physiotherapy council or association in the Central African Republic. Such lack of organization might be why there is no publication regarding the research participation of physiotherapists based in the Central African Republic.

### **BARRIERS TO EVIDENCE-BASED PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE IN CHAD**

Chad is a landlocked country in Central Africa. Libya to the north, Sudan to the east, the Central African Republic to the south, Cameroon to the southwest, Nigeria to the southwest (at Lake Chad), and Niger to the west of the country's borders. [13] There is no publication found that talks about the barriers to evidence-based physiotherapy practice in Chad. There is no known independent physiotherapy council or association in Chad. Such lack of organization might be why there is no publication regarding the research participation of physiotherapists based in Chad.

### **BARRIERS TO EVIDENCE-BASED PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

Equatorial Guinea is a tropical African country that shares maritime boundaries with Nigeria and São Tomé and Príncipe, as well as the. Equatorial Guinea comprises five inhabited islands and Ro Muni, a piece of the African mainland. [14] There is no publication found that talks about the barriers to evidence-based physiotherapy practice in Equatorial Guinea. There is no known independent physiotherapy council or association in Equatorial Guinea. Such lack of organization might be why there is no publication regarding the research participation of physiotherapists based in Equatorial Guinea.

### **BARRIERS TO EVIDENCE-BASED PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE IN GABON**

Gabon is a central African country that borders the Atlantic Ocean on the west and Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, and the Republic of the Congo on the east. [15] There is no publication found that talks about the barriers to evidence-based physiotherapy practice in Gabon. There is no known independent physiotherapy council or

association in Gabon. Such lack of organization might be why there is no publication regarding the research participation of physiotherapists based in Gabon.

### **BARRIERS TO EVIDENCE-BASED PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE IN SÃO TOMÉ & PRÍNCIPE**

The Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe is located west of Gabon on Africa's mainland. Príncipe island lies west of Equatorial Guinea. Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Nigeria share sea borders with the island nation. [16] There is no publication found that talks about the barriers to evidence-based physiotherapy practice in São Tomé & Príncipe. There is no known independent physiotherapy council or association in São Tomé & Príncipe. Such lack of organization might be why there is no publication regarding the research participation of physiotherapists based in São Tomé & Príncipe.

### **CONCLUSION**

Except for Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the physiotherapy profession in the central African region is unorganized. Only one researcher from Cameroon has tried to explore the possible barriers to research participation by physiotherapy students. The lack of contextual literature, lack of regulatory bodies, and lack of professional associations might be hindering the exposure and motivation to advocate and practice evidence-based-physiotherapy. The government agencies and educational institutions need to strategically address these issues so that the evidence-based-physiotherapy practice flourishes in these countries.

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