



AUSTRALIAN
PHYSIOTHERAPY
ASSOCIATION



Use of artificial intelligence in physiotherapy

Statement from the Australian Physiotherapy Association

August 2026

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Preamble

Artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare is an evolving field, with AI technologies developing rapidly and widespread application across numerous fields including physiotherapy. In these contexts, AI is being increasingly utilised for applications such as clinical decision support, administrative automation, digital triage, movement analysis, advanced data analysis, and patient education (amongst other uses).

As these tools become more prominent in the delivery of physiotherapy services, this statement offers key principles to guide physiotherapists in navigating the complex and continuously evolving relationship between emerging technology and professional standards. This document is aligned with the guidance issued by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency¹ (Ahpra) in meeting professional obligations when using AI in healthcare, alongside key frameworks from the Australian Government² and World Health Organization (WHO). It is not guidance on how and when to apply AI in physiotherapy practice. This is a principles-based statement in a rapidly evolving field. The APA will review it as regulatory guidance and the technology mature.

APA position on the use of AI in physiotherapy

Artificial intelligence should serve as a collaborative tool that supports physiotherapy practice and must be used with appropriate ethics oversight.

AI should not be used as a substitute for professional judgement, clinical reasoning, diagnosis or advice, and must always be subject to the oversight of a registered physiotherapist who retains professional responsibility for the care provided. Physiotherapists retain ultimate responsibility for validating and contextualising their use of AI in alignment with principles of evidence-based practice and patient-centred care.

What is AI?

For the purposes of this statement, the APA defines the role of AI in physiotherapy as the use of automated computerised systems or algorithmic logic, including models based on machine learning or rule-based processes, to support, augment, or automate aspects of physiotherapy practice.

¹ Meeting your professional obligations when using Artificial Intelligence in healthcare. Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Resources/Artificial-Intelligence-in-healthcare.aspx>

² Australia's AI Ethics Principles. Australian Department of Industry, Science and Resources. <https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/australias-ai-ethics-principles>

Ethical principles for the use of AI

The APA recognises that AI will continue to transform multiple aspects of physiotherapy, creating new opportunities for collective benefit. However, these innovations also demand careful consideration and a measured approach to ensure the technology aligns with the profession's values and interests.

The WHO report *Ethics and Governance of Artificial Intelligence for Health* (2021)³ outlines six core ethical principles for the use of AI in healthcare: protect human autonomy, promote well-being and safety, ensure transparency and explainability, foster responsibility and accountability, uphold inclusiveness and equity, and support responsiveness and sustainability.

Guiding principles for the use of AI

Ahpra and the National Boards set out practitioners' professional obligations when using AI in their guidance [*Meeting your professional obligations when using Artificial Intelligence in healthcare*](#), which is the authoritative source and should be read in full. The principles below frame that guidance for physiotherapy practice. This APA statement is intended to support, not replace, Ahpra's guidance. In the event of any inconsistency, Ahpra's guidance takes precedence.

1. Accountability

People responsible for the different phases of the AI system lifecycle should be identifiable and accountable for the outcomes of the AI systems, and human oversight of AI systems should be ensured.

2. Understanding of AI technologies

Physiotherapists should engage in continuous learning to stay updated on advancements in AI and its applications in physiotherapy, with the goal of understanding and applying this ethically to benefit the community.

3. Transparency

The use of AI in physiotherapy is transparent to all stakeholders, including patients, healthcare professionals, regulatory bodies and the wider community and the physiotherapist should not misrepresent AI generated content as entirely their own.

4. Informed consent

Clinicians must disclose whether AI is assisting in patient care. Patients and stakeholders must be clearly informed of the nature, purpose, and limitations of the AI system and must consent to this use without coercion and that this is documented appropriately.

5. Ethical and legal issues

Uses of AI must ensure the protection of patient data privacy and confidentiality when using AI technologies in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and the National Law. Users must also adhere to all relevant organisational guidelines and regulations governing the use of AI in physiotherapy and their workplace.

³ Ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health. World Health Organization. [Ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health](#)

6. Inclusiveness and equitable

The use of AI should be inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds and should support the provision of equitable care to all in the community, irrespective of race, gender, disability or socioeconomic status. Physiotherapists should support the health and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and all patients from diverse backgrounds by understanding the inherent bias that can exist in the data and algorithms underlying AI applications, and using these tools only where appropriate.

7. Reliability and safety

Physiotherapists should select and use AI tools that are fit for their intended purpose, applying them only within that validated purpose and discontinuing reliance on a tool where its outputs prove unreliable or inaccurate. Where reliability cannot be assured, the physiotherapist's own clinical judgement prevails.

Conclusion

The use of AI should serve as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for professional judgement, clinical reasoning, diagnosis or advice. Its use must occur under the appropriate oversight of a registered physiotherapist, with the application of Ahpra and the National Board's AI principles embedded into practice. Physiotherapists remain responsible for ensuring AI is applied in a way that aligns with evidence-based practice and patient-centred care.