

Course Curriculum

This course curriculum has been developed by the Physiotherapists and Refugees Education Project (PREP) team. PREP is an Erasmus+ funded project which aims to design, develop and deliver an evidence-informed, online education programme to prepare physiotherapists to treat people with refugee experience. This group includes members from seven organisations in six countries: Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (Bergen, Norway), Centre for Migration Health (Bergen, Norway), Karolinska Institute (Stockholm, Sweden), HAN University of Applied Science (Nijmegen, Netherlands), Duke University (North Carolina, USA), Physiopedia (UK) and Trinity College Dublin (Dublin, Ireland).

Course Aim

This course will enable physiotherapists to develop competencies to provide equitable, high quality and culturally responsive rehabilitation for people with refugee experience. Using applied reasoning we will explore a range of topics including migration experience, health systems, legislation and their impact on refugee health. This will enable learners to understand their scope of practice and role to provide person centred and deal with ambiguity and changing situations when working with people with refugee experience.

Course Design and Pedagogical Approach

The course will be made up of ten blocks and will be run over ten weeks. This course equates to 5ECTS credits and will take participants approximately 102-140 hours to complete. Participants will have two options regarding the structure of the course. In the first option, the Stream, participants will complete the blocks in sequential order. There will be facilitated discussion sessions in each block so all participants will need to complete each block on time so that they are ready to contribute in the next discussion. Participants who choose the second option, the Garden, will be able to complete the blocks in whichever order they prefer. The assessments and facilitated discussions will be different for those taking the Garden option and will be decided by the participants as a group.

The course has been designed under the philosophy of 'mindlines' with the aim that evidence from a range of sources is synthesised with knowledge gained from experience to become internalised as the learner's personal guide to practice. The course will help the learner to develop pronesis on which to base decisions so that when the context changes, their thinking can adapt and change to meet the new circumstances. Reflection is a core component of this course and participants will be asked to reflect on their own beliefs, behaviours and practices and to identify gaps in their knowledge. Participants will be presented with complex case studies and ethical dilemmas to allow them to put their knowledge and reflections into practice. Central to the course will be recognition that persons with refugee experience are individuals and that principles and practices cannot be applied in a blanket approach but instead must be tailored to the individual.

The course is aimed at physiotherapists who are novice in the area of working with people with refugee experience. Learning activities will include group discussions, reading materials, videos, case studies, reflective activities, quizzes and assignments (e.g. essays, guidelines for accessing care, advocacy letter). Before beginning the course, participants will be asked to complete a pre-course competency and confidence check. They will also be asked to complete this again at the end of the course.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Through engagement with this course, participants will:

1. Seek country specific knowledge about policy and legislation in the migration field to enhance their understanding of the life situation of people with refugee experience.
2. Recognize when past and/or present violation of human rights has occurred and take action as required.
3. Cultivate cultural sensitivity in order to create a trusting therapeutic space and facilitate communication with patients and significant others.
4. Identify barriers to accessing healthcare and increase knowledge of health systems and support networks to enable them to guide people with refugee experience towards empowerment and optimal service.
5. Strive to reduce barriers to interprofessional communication and facilitate effective interprofessional teamwork.
6. Detect and document health, functioning and disability stemming from the migration process and adapt treatment approach as appropriate.
7. Use holistic approaches to reduce the impact of trauma and address patient difficulties related to pain, trauma and psychosocial issues.
8. Explore what the physiotherapy role can be in response to challenges and to patients' changing needs.
9. Recognize the importance of self care, peer guidance and multiprofessional teamwork to safeguard and sustain their own health.
10. Take a critical role towards current practice and act as a change agent.

Course blocks

At the beginning of the course, all participants will introduce themselves and give information about their professional background, where they come from and their expectations for the course. The group interaction throughout the blocks will allow the participants to learn from each other as well as from the course material throughout the programme. It will also allow collaboration between participants on assigned project work.

Assessments within the course will be meaningful and transformational and a source of learning. Participants will receive a certificate for each block on successful completion of the assessment methods for that block. Participants will also be asked to maintain a reflective log throughout the course as well as completing assigned reflective essays.

Block 1 - “In the paper!”
This block provides an introduction to the course. It opens with a story of a physiotherapist reading a newspaper article about refugees coming to Europe. This block provides contextual information to build participants’ knowledge and understanding of history, geography, legislation and epidemiology related to refugees.
Topics covered: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A brief history of refugees including definitions of terms• Global context – geopolitics, where refugees are from and where they go, the changing political landscape• Legislative differences between countries• The Dublin Regulation• Epidemiology of communicable and non-communicable disease among people with refugee experience• Epidemiology of mental health problems among people with refugee experience
Reading materials:
Assessment: Reflective assignment about legislation related to refugees in their country
Learning outcomes: 1, 4, 6
Estimated time: 12-16 hours

Block 2 - “In my schedule I see Mr Nazari is coming tomorrow”

This block is introduced with the story of a physiotherapist checking her schedule for the next day and realising that she will be seeing Mr Nazari, a man with refugee experience. The physiotherapist’s heart sinks because she does not feel adequately prepared to provide optimal care to persons with refugee experience. The physiotherapist wishes that people with refugee experience would make more of an effort to integrate into the culture of the host country. This block covers bias and stereotyping, human rights, navigating the health system and the physiotherapy role in providing healthcare for people with refugee experience. The physiotherapist reflects on how she will approach this treatment session tomorrow.

Topics covered

- Barriers to accessing healthcare in host countries including bias and stereotyping
- How society and the media contextualises and portrays people with refugee experience
- Interprofessional working to improve access to services and navigation of health service
- Human rights
- Duty to document human rights violations (past and present)
- Physiotherapist’s role in terms of working with people with refugee experience
- Salutogenetic approach to wellness

Reading materials:

Assessment: Advocacy exercise e.g. write a letter to a politician about an issue related to refugees in their country

Learning outcomes: 2, 4, 5, 8

Estimated time: 12-16 hours

Block 3 – “I can’t feel my foot”

This block starts with the story of a refugee with ongoing paraesthesia in her foot following a long, traumatic boat journey from her home country. This block focuses on the impact of migration on health and determinants of health for people with refugee experience. It covers the importance of taking a biopsychosocial approach and treating each patient as an individual. The relationship between trauma and pain and trauma-informed care are also explored.

Topics covered

- Health-related factors and determinants of health
- Salutogenetic approach to wellness
- Impact of migration on health
- Trauma-informed care
- Biopsychosocial approach
- ICF model
- Cultural differences in understanding of pain (pain in the heart, embodiment of pain, spiritual aspects of pain, djinn)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder

Reading materials

Assessment: Quiz on health factors, determinants of health and the ICF model. Reflection on their understanding of the concept of pain.

Learning outcomes: 3, 6, 7

Estimated time: 12-16 hours

Block 4 - “My patient doesn’t trust the translator”

This block focuses on a physiotherapist’s reflections on her interactions with Naima, a patient from a refugee background, whom she saw earlier that day. Since introducing a translator to their sessions to try and improve communication, Naima has become more guarded in her posture and body language and appears reluctant to discuss her health problems.

Topics covered

- Building trust
- Creating therapeutic space and alliance
- Understanding the role of the translators (overcoming challenges, strategies to employ)
- Facilitating optimal communication (verbal and non-verbal)
- AAAQ framework

Reading materials

Assessment: Peer feedback on facilitated discussion of building a trusting therapeutic space and relationship

Learning outcomes: 3, 5

Estimated time: 8-12 hours

Block 5 – Case study 1

This block focuses on a case study of a person from a refugee background who is attending an outpatient physiotherapy appointment due to ongoing pain in their right shoulder.

Topics covered:

- Physiotherapy assessment of pain within a trauma-informed care model
- Evidence-based management of pain
- Providing care for survivors of torture (understanding types and consequences of torture)
- Mental health and physiotherapy
- Cultural beliefs about pain and alternative therapies
- Communication strategies for discussing difficult topics

Reading materials

Assessment: Design a treatment plan for someone who has survived torture and presentation to their co-workers.

Learning outcomes: 3, 7, 8

Estimated time: 10-14 hours

Block 6 – Case study 2

This block focuses on a case study of a young adult from a refugee background who has sustained a spinal cord injury. The patient is currently receiving rehabilitation as an in-patient, but the multi-disciplinary team are now starting to plan for their discharge to the community. The patient's family have been reluctant to engage with the community care and health system and are resistant to advice regarding modifications that may need to be made to the family home. The block covers the provision of culturally sensitive care, barriers to accessing care and cultural differences in perceptions of health and illness.

Topics covered:

- Providing culturally sensitive care
- Health literacy
- Use of a translator
- Understanding of refugees' expectations of the health care system
- Stages of the migration process and their influence on migrants' health
- Carlos Sluzki's Model of Migration
- Overcoming barriers to accessing care and providing guidance for navigating the healthcare system.

Reading materials

Assessment: Proposal to improve service delivery in their workplace in relation to people with refugee experience

Learning outcomes: 3, 4, 5, 8, 10

Estimated time: 10-14 hours

Block 7 – Case study 3

This block focuses on a case study of a child from a refugee background who has been recently diagnosed with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. The child started to exhibit symptoms before leaving their home country, but the family were hopeful that curative treatment would be possible in the host country. The parents are reluctant to disclose details of the diagnosis to the child as they do not wish to take their hope away. This block covers working with children with refugee experience, communication techniques, ethical issues and palliative care for persons with refugee experience.

Topics covered:

- Communication strategies for difficult conversations
- Considerations for working with children with refugee experience
- Facilitation of inter-professional working in the community setting
- Health literacy
- Ethical issues related to different beliefs about health and illness
- Culturally sensitive palliative care and cultural beliefs about dying

Reading materials

Assessment: Peer feedback on discussion session of ethical issues

Learning outcomes: 3, 4, 5, 8

Estimated time: 10-14 hours

Block 8 – Case study 4

This block focuses on a case study of an older person with refugee experience who has been living in the host country for several decades. The patient is referred for physiotherapy in the community setting because her mobility is declining and she is considered at risk of falls. She has persistent pain in her right hip and also discloses symptoms of anxiety and depression. As the therapeutic relationship develops, the patient invites the physiotherapist to dinner with her family.

Topics covered

- Mental health and physiotherapy
- Building a therapeutic relationship and facilitation of communication
- Holistic approaches to address patient difficulties related to trauma and psychosocial issues.
- Consequences of migration and living in exile
- Salutogenic approach to wellness
- Scope and boundaries of physiotherapy practice

Reading materials

Assessment: Curation of resources on health promotion that they can use in their practice.

Learning outcomes: 3, 6, 7, 8, 10

Estimated time: 10-14 hours

Block 9 - “When work gets to me”

This block is based on a conversation between a physiotherapist and his colleague. The physiotherapist has had a difficult day as he listened to the stories of people with refugee experience who have suffered traumatic experiences and loss. The physiotherapist also heard another member of the multi-disciplinary team making racist remarks about one of the patients. This block covers strategies that health professionals can employ for their own self-care, discussion of interprofessional teamwork and peer guidance and guidance on addressing racism in the workplace. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their own cultural beliefs to improve self-awareness so they can better understand the behaviours of others.

Topics covered

- Self-care for health professionals
- Interprofessional teamwork strategies
- Peer guidance
- Cultural self-awareness
- Addressing racism in the workplace
- Advocacy strategies

Reading materials

Assessment: Devise a plan for maintaining their own self-care. Design an infographic to share with colleagues about self-care strategies. Peer feedback from other participants on the plan and infographic.

Learning outcomes: 5, 8, 9, 10

Estimated time: 10-14 hours

Block 10 - Future directions of the physiotherapy role
In this final block, the physiotherapist is reading the newspaper once again. This time the article is about the impact of climate change and the increasing number of climate migrants who are predicted to come to Europe in the coming years. This block will consider how and how the physiotherapy role and scope of practice may need to change to meet the needs of new populations.
Topics covered <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate migrants• International differences – comparative analysis of refugee populations from different countries and how this may change• Changing role of physiotherapy
Reading materials
Assessment: Reflective essay on the current and future role of physiotherapy in migrant health
Learning outcomes: 1, 8, 9, 10
Estimated time: 8-10 hours