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# Digital Health Technologies in the Context of Physiotherapy

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## Key Findings

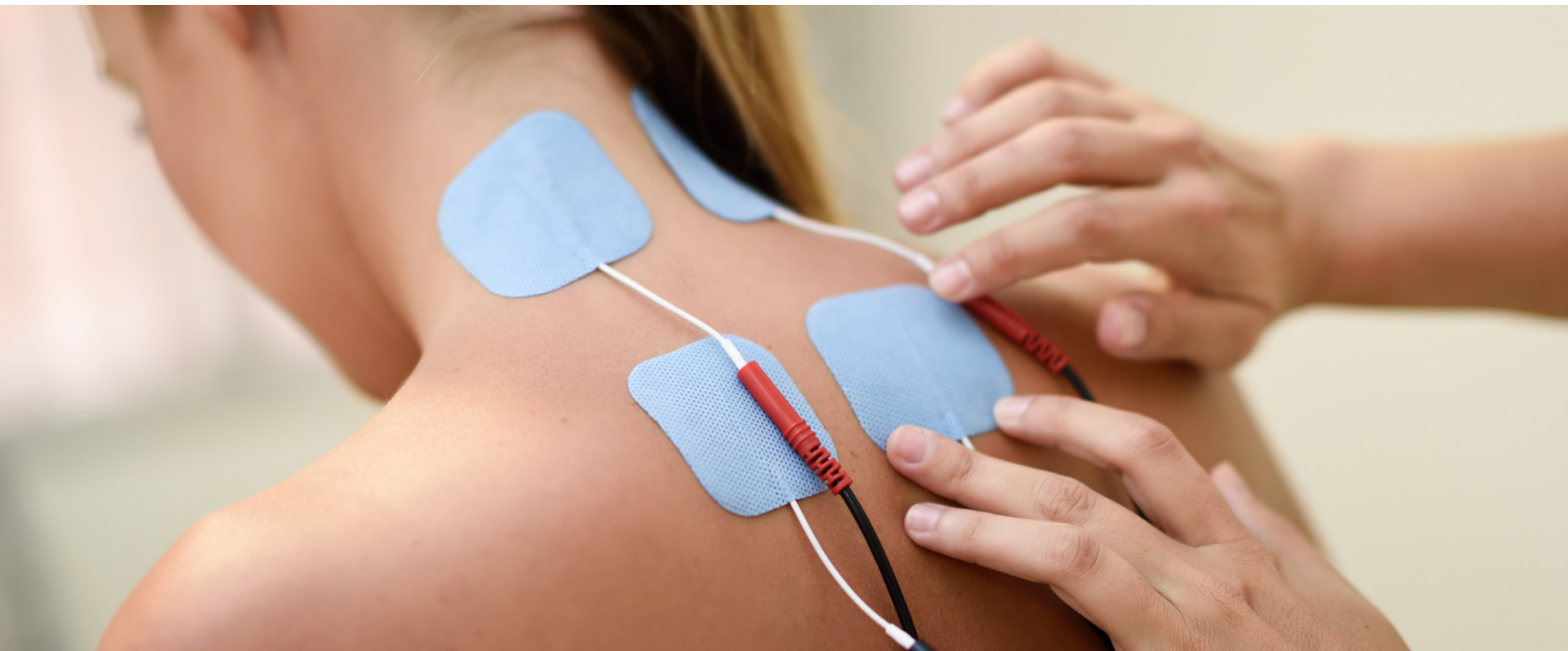
1. Barriers to the adoption of digital health technologies in physiotherapy practice include a lack of clinician confidence in using, identifying and evaluating the quality of these technologies.
2. Previous experience is the most influential to clinicians' confidence with using digital health technology.
3. A lack of training and IT support is credited with being the least influential to clinicians' confidence with using digital health technology.

## Practicing Chartered Physiotherapists

In terms of daily physiotherapy practice, there is potential for digital health technologies to be adopted for the use of receiving and capturing diagnostic imaging results, for documenting patient data (verifying a patient's personal details and entering a patient's free text clinical progression notes) and communicating with other clinicians on peer communication groups, when conducting case consultations, and when managing referrals/reports.

According to practicing musculoskeletal physiotherapists, there is no current place for digital health technologies to be used for tracking patients' medication consumption, prompting thinking using software that supports clinical decision making and sending non-routine or unexpected health event alerts about a patient.

**According to clinicians, there is a perceived threat of losing the personal element of physiotherapy care with the adoption of digital health technology in practice.**



## Further Research

There is scope for further research to identify clinicians' willingness to adopt DHT across other domains of physiotherapy. This would move closer to the goal of integrated care across services, in particular when working with patients that may present with complex conditions.

Furthermore, if this study were to be readministered, a larger sample of greater variety in demographics would lead to results more applicable across a wider range of circumstances. Thus, providing an enhanced description of the views held by the general population of physiotherapists in Ireland. If a larger sample size was obtained, there may also be potential to explore any correlations that may exist between age, gender or level of education and willingness to engage with digital health technology.

## Findings

The findings of this survey have revealed that musculoskeletal physiotherapists in Ireland view digital health technology as a valuable adjunct to facilitate current service delivery and are willing to embrace it in various aspects of their practice.

It has revealed the potential for digital interventions to be implemented to aid data recording, accessing digital imaging, various administrative tasks and communication with other healthcare professionals. It has also exposed the need for extensive training if clinicians are to successfully utilise this technology in their practice. Overall there is a sense of positivity with regards to accepting the digital age of healthcare, while acknowledging its limits. It is broadly appreciated by the respondents of this survey that digital interventions are cost effective, time effective and provide solutions to various barriers to healthcare such as long waiting lists.

These results also support the findings of most recent literature in this area. However, there is currently no form of digital technology valuable enough in the eyes of clinicians to capture the complexity of the human condition through clinical reasoning. Thus, emphasising the role that Digital Health Technologies will play in the future of musculoskeletal physiotherapy as a valuable addition to current practice.

**Key references:**

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