

Physiotherapy: The importance of union for the development of the profession

Approximately 60 years ago, Physiotherapy started its career in Brazil. We began as physiotherapy technicians, evolved for assistants and conquered our autonomy in 1969, as higher education professionals.

Just to remember, the legal statement no. 388 of 1963 of the Federal Council of Education says

the referred Committee insists on the characterization of these professionals as medical assistants who perform tasks of therapeutic character under the supervision and responsibility of the doctor. The doctor is responsible for directing, heading and leading the team of rehabilitation, whose basic elements are: the doctor, the social worker, the psychologist, the physical therapist and the occupational therapist [...].

The last two shall not diagnose the disease or disability to be corrected. *It is up to them to perform to perfection, those techniques, learning and exercises recommended by the doctor, leading to cure or to the recovery of those partially disabled for social life. Hence, the Commission preferred that the new paramedics professionals be called Technicians in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy (emphasis added).*

The Legislative Decree no. 938, of October 13, 1969, stated in its 2nd article: “the *physical therapist* and the occupational therapist, graduated from recognized schools and courses, are *higher*

education professionals” (emphasis added). Its 3rd article states that “it is an *exclusive activity* of physical therapists to perform physiotherapeutic methods and techniques to restore, develop and preserve the physical capacity of the patient” (emphasis added).

Our reality has changed a lot over the last 40 years: at the end of the 1960s, Brazil had little more than 600 professionals and five Physiotherapy courses. Today we have over 500 courses and roughly 200 thousand professionals.

But not everything has changed, and we still need to ponder on: How valued is our profession? How does each one of us exercise the profession? What we have done to improve the visibility and quality of our work? Have we united to achieve fair remuneration? Do we value our jobs and the exercise of the exclusive activity of physical therapists or do we continue to accept the medical prescription?

We are many, but if we do not unite and fight for professional valuation, our path will be long and tortuous. Do your part, value Physiotherapy.

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