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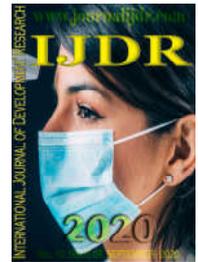
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## PHYSIOTHERAPY IN BRAZIL AND ITS CONTEXT DURING THE 2019 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE PANDEMIC

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### ABSTRACT

Physiotherapy is recognized as a science and regulated profession for more than 50 years and has shown significant evolution in technical and scientific fields in Brazilian scenario. In the context of Coronavirus 2019, physiotherapists have faced major challenges in primary health care, adapting themselves to changes in secondary care through remote assistance that was recently authorized by the Federal Council of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy as an exception and finally have achieved a great importance in tertiary care due to prevention and treatment of respiratory disabilities and reduction of functional impairment that may occur during hospitalization.

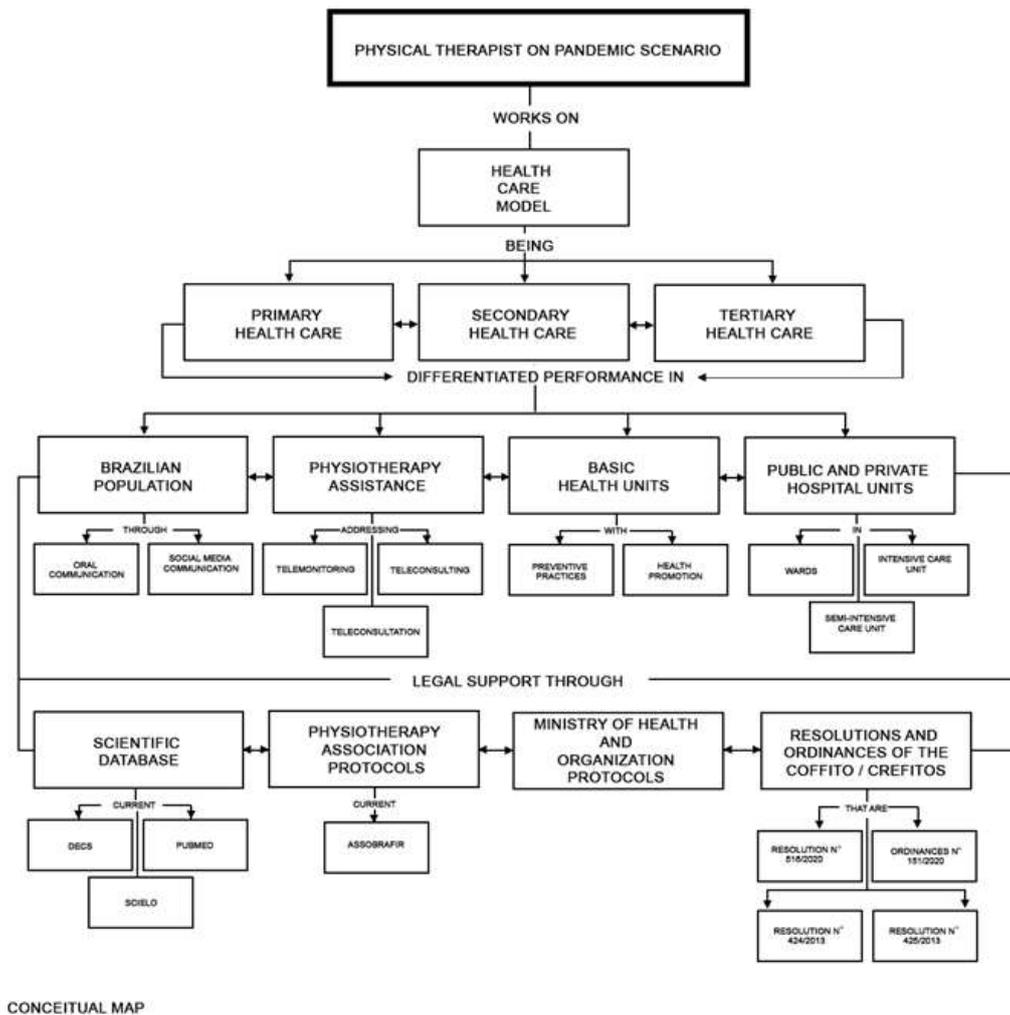
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### INTRODUCTION

The emergence of physical rehabilitation took place in the context of important historical landmarks: the first and second world wars, the slow development of urbanization and the Industrial Revolution. Such events caused, in a portion of the population, physical sequelae and occupational diseases, in addition to favoring the emergence of epidemics. In Brazil, this area of activity has had great success, due to the cases of children with physical limitations due to polio (Barros, 2008; Espíndola, 2011). In view of the development of health science, medicine was divided into specific areas and subdivisions. Initially, Rehabilitation Medicine broke out, and then Physiotherapy (Espíndola, 2011). In Brazil, Physiotherapy started through technical training and was later regulated as a higher education profession on October 13, 1969, through Decree Law No. 9383. The great advances in knowledge in the field of Physiotherapy allow assistance in the

field of rehabilitation to be expanded and, finally, professionals in this great area of health, can act both in the primary health care, as well as in the secondary and tertiary ones. In primary care, the physiotherapist has an important role in promoting and preventing conditions in different environments, in raising awareness about basic healthy habits and encouraging community participation in collective health, through joint actions with the multidisciplinary team, either individually. or in group activities (Leal, 2015). Despite the health evolution, many educational practices still remain centered on the health model, limiting the professional's participation in the process of behavior change in the face of health issues (Ribeiro, 2015). The physiotherapists professional practice in the secondary sector has a curative and rehabilitating character in individuals with functional limitations resulting from chronic and genetic pathologies (especially among children) and also due to the large number of injuries from external causes, especially among people of working age (Prado, 2017).



**Figure 1. Physiotherapist in the 2019 Pandemic Coronavirus disease scenario Prepared by the authors, 2020**

**Table 1: Resolutions and technical notes of Brazilian Physical Therapy Associations during COVID-19 Pandemic**

Association	Technical Note	Announcement / Recommendations
Brazilian Association of Physiotherapy in Oncology	Technical note on oncology physiotherapy in the face of the COVID pandemic - 19	
Brazilian Association of Neurofunctional Physiotherapy (ABRAFIN)		Recommendation for neurofunctional physiotherapists in the face of COVID-19 Pandemic
Brazilian Association of Aquatic Physiotherapy - ABFA		Communication No. 1 for the aquatic physiotherapy service provider during Covid-19 Pandemic
Brazilian Association of Aquatic Physiotherapy - ABFA		Communication No. 2 about the return of Aquatic Physiotherapy services in Brazil
Brazilian Association of Physiotherapy in Gerontology - ABRAFIGE	Note Number 01/2020 regarding physical therapy assistance to the elderly in times of COVID-19	
Brazilian Association of Physiotherapy in Gerontology - ABRAFIGE	Note No. 02/2020 about physical therapy assistance to the elderly in times of COVID-19	
Brazilian Association of Dermatological Physiotherapy		ABRAFIDEF COVID-19 Recommendations

Prepared by authors, 2020.

In the tertiary sector, which corresponds to assistance in hospitals, the performance of its activities expands in the wards and in the Intensive Care Units (ICU), in addition to the ambulatories present in these institutions. It is worth mentioning that the role of the professional physiotherapist in the scope of the ICU started in the late 1970s and has gained great relevance in its practice, due to the early mobilization of the critical patient in order to reduce systemic complications and minimize functional losses, in addition to of the

management of mechanical ventilation<sup>8</sup>. This same study highlights that physiotherapists in the field of mechanical ventilation have increasingly sought to base their protocols on national and international recommendations, aiming to reduce the time of mechanical ventilation according to the clinical condition of each patient. In the first months of the year 2020, due to the Coronavirus Disease Pandemic 2019 (COVID-19), Physiotherapy had a major challenge at the primary health level and major adjustments at the secondary level and a

significant highlight at the tertiary level. It is worth mentioning that these practices, at the three levels of health care, are based on the determinations of the World Health Organization (WHO), Ministry of Health (MS), as well as the protocols, resolutions and notes defined by Associations of Physiotherapy and Ordinances of the Federal Council of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy (COFFITO). It is worth noting that through Ordinance No. 1519, COFFITO created the National Register of Volunteer Professionals (CNPV), which aims to register and map professionals who are available to work in public health actions related to the Coronavirus pandemic. This determination complies with the Physiotherapy Code of Ethics and Deontology, through Resolution n° 424<sup>10</sup>, of July 8, 2013 - (DOU n° 147, Section 1 of 08/01/2013), Article 9, item V. Figure 1 shows the current context of physical therapy in the context of the Coronavirus 2019 Pandemic. At the primary level, physical therapists, along with other health professionals, have carried out health education actions for the prevention of COVID-19, either face-to-face or through technologies of information and communication. However, it is known that these practices are an immense challenge, since in Brazil, there is a heterogeneous social scenario, with individuals living in precarious housing and sanitary conditions. These factors contribute to the greater vulnerability to COVID-19. With regard to practices at the secondary level, there was a great concern of physiotherapists, in maintaining attendance, due to social isolation. To keep the assistance, Federal Council of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, provisionally vetoed Article 15, item II and Article 39 of COFFITO Resolution No. 424/2013 and Article 15, item II and Article 39 of COFFITO Resolution No. 425/2013 and established Resolution n° 516/2020<sup>11</sup> that allows non-attendance in specific and well-described modalities, carried out through Information and Communication Technologies. Such regulations clarify the eligibility for this type of assistance. This current modality of care, although it favors overcoming territorial barriers, cost reduction and displacement disorder and the client's comfort in carrying out professional assistance in the comfort of his home, it is essential to highlight that the professional physiotherapist must have the ability to use social media and or digital platforms for quality assistance. In addition, many users of public health services do not have access to technological means, making access to this type of care difficult. Public managers, in the three spheres of government, are responsible for actions to include this portion of the population. Table 1 shows the technical norms and communications established by Physical Therapy associations, in accordance with government decrees, for care in clinics, offices, homes and outpatient clinics.

Physical therapy assistance in hospital units, aims to prevent and recover the respiratory deficiencies and functional limitations caused by COVID-19 (Silva, 2020). There are lots of evidence about the professional practice of Physiotherapy in intensive care units and in Brazil, the Brazilian Association of Cardiorespiratory Physiotherapy and Physiotherapy in Intensive Care (ASSOBRAFIR) has launched several recommendations, supported by the experiences of countries that have had or have a huge numbers of cases of COVID-19, recommendations and scientific publications on therapeutic resources in Acute Respiratory Discomfort Syndrome (ARDS) and other coronaviruses: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Guimarães, 2020). Hospital physiotherapists have direct contact with suspected patients or confirmed cases of COVID-19 and must be

properly attired. However, there are many reports on the scarcity and inadequacy of personal protective equipment (PPE), putting them at risk to their health from all those who are part of their life in different areas. In compliance with the prevention rules published by the National Health Surveillance Agency in 2020<sup>14</sup> and as a way of protecting the professional class, ASSOBRAFIR<sup>15</sup> published technical rules on the use of personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this document, physiotherapists must use PPE according to their place of service and the possibility or not of generating aerosols during their assistance. Such equipment involves: masks (N95 or PFF2 without exhalation valve, or N99 or PFF3 without exhalation valve); glasses and facial shield; capote / apron / cap or overalls and gloves). In addition to the technical issues inherent to the profession, physiotherapist has also been highlighted in scientific field, seeking to produce evidence in relation to appropriate resources and treatments to minimize the functional damage resulting from COVID-19 (Silva, 2020).

### Final Considerations

Physiotherapy, since its regularization in Brazil, has undergone significant transformations regarding legal issues to clinical practice, seeking broad foundations in the world literature for an evidence-based practice. In this scenario, the profession has shown an important prominence, especially in hospital units, where, through daily strategies, based on institutional protocols, communicated by ASSOBRAFIR, other studies and patient assessment, the aim is to minimize functional losses, length of hospital stay and planning of hospitalization. As in the early days of Physiotherapy in Brazil, during the polio epidemic, it is believed that many reestablished patients of phase 1 of COVID-19 will need physical therapy to return to previous levels of functional activity, or when it is not possible, to adapt it. them. However, it is important to point out that the access to physical therapy care by the Unified Health System is still uneven among Brazilian regions and that although it was always a reason for debate, in the current scenario, it is urgent to expand the population's access to this type of service.

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