

(Mobile) technology in physiotherapy: 21st century healthcare skills for physiotherapists

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The society is changing. In the past 20 years, we have seen enormous rise in the use of technology and how this affects our behaviour and our society functions. As of this day, we have more mobile phones in the world than we have people on this planet (1). The rise of technology also means that our patients are changing. A patient used to have complete trust in you as a physiotherapist, but now they can look up their injuries and symptoms and gain insight in their own matter within minutes. Patients have made the shift from being dependent on the physiotherapist to self diagnosing and even self treatment.

Not only technology has changed in the past years, also physiotherapy has changed drastically. We are slowly moving away from a hands-on approach to a more hands-off approach where you as a physiotherapist coach a patient to better outcomes. With the rise of internet, smartphones and other mobile technology patients know their way around apps and technology to monitor and work on their health or injuries with self management tools.

These developments change the way we should look at our patients. Treatments need to be supported by evidence and we physiotherapists have a more coaching role than before. With that change, technology can make sure we keep our profession future proof. For example, we see several research projects that support blended physiotherapy; the combination of on site care with patient engagement tools (2).

During this lecture we will discuss recent and future developments of healthcare and technology. We will go back 20 years and discuss developments that have changed healthcare and that will change healthcare on short notice, like the rise of mobile applications, wearables, virtual reality and the influence of major corporates like Google, Apple and Amazon. We want to discuss this both from a patient perspective and from the physiotherapist's perspective.

In the end we will present concrete examples of how we can make physiotherapy future proof and how we can see technology as an opportunity to enhance the profession of the physiotherapist.

Key words: Mobile technology, smartphones, apps for health, self-management

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