



Physiotherapy

Keeps a body moving

"I have a passion for health and wellbeing, and being active. I like the fact that I can help patients with these goals in mind - and help them return to their activities and sports."

Sequoia Cooper BPhy

Physiotherapy plays an essential role in helping people to achieve optimal physical function and healthy lifestyles. Physiotherapists treat people of all ages and from all sorts of backgrounds - they might have a painful back, occupational injury, cystic fibrosis, or have recently given birth. They could be recovering from an accident, a sporting injury, or maybe they have undergone heart surgery. Physiotherapists are educated to assess, treat, and prevent this vast range of physical limitations and dysfunction. By using therapy such as exercises, and manual and electrotherapeutic techniques, physiotherapists are able to assist their patients to lead independent, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

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What is a physiotherapist?

Physiotherapists are educated to assess, treat, and prevent a vast range of physical limitations and bodily dysfunction. By using therapy such as exercises and manual and electrotherapeutic techniques, physiotherapists assist patients to lead independent, healthy, and fulfilling lives. This makes physiotherapy an extremely rewarding career.

The best physiotherapists are those with exceptional communication skills, a genuine desire to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of others, and who have a good level of physical fitness.

What will I study?

The Otago Bachelor of Physiotherapy (BPhy) is a prestigious four-year programme. It is internationally renowned for excellence because its graduates are among the best, and because it ensures its clinical teaching and research programmes are continually refined and improved, to keep in step with modern physiotherapy practice, the latest research, and current thinking on teaching methodologies.

The first year comprises the University of Otago Health Sciences First Year (HSFY) programme. This is a prescribed set of papers designed to provide a broad understanding of the scientific principles and communication skills which will underpin your further studies.

In the second year, the programme focuses on the scientific knowledge you will need as a physiotherapist, including anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and an introduction to physiotherapy science and clinical practice.

The third year builds on your understanding of the human body, and introduces pathology and some of the broader issues encountered in practice, including management skills, and engagement with the community. Clinical practice is also a key element of the third year programme.

In the fourth (final) year, you will be based at one of the School's clinical centres in Dunedin, Christchurch, or Wellington. You will spend the majority of the year undertaking supervised

clinical practice around New Zealand. This means you will be able to sample many of the different fields of physiotherapy practice, to help you make decisions about your future career. You will also have the opportunity to undertake a research project.

BPhy(Hons)

Top achieving students in Year 3 of the programme are invited to undertake an honours programme in the fourth year. This qualification will enable direct entry to a research career.

Background required

There are no subject requirements for entry into the Health Sciences First Year (HSFY) programme, but we strongly recommend you take chemistry, physics, and biology at Year 13. HSFY must be your first year of university study. If you are considering tertiary study before enrolling, you are strongly advised to contact the Health Sciences Admissions Office beforehand.

Admission to the programme

Admission to Physiotherapy is competitive; each year approximately 80 places are filled by students who have completed the HSFY programme at the University of Otago.

Selection is based on your grades in the HSFY papers. The minimum grade point average requirement is a B- (65%).

Applications are also considered in the Two or More Years of University Study category, the Graduate category, and the Alternative category (for allied health professionals and mature graduates). Applicants who are of Māori or Pacific Island (Polynesian) descent may request this be taken into account as part of their application.

Single Programme Preference is available for students wishing to apply for Physiotherapy. The Admissions Committee will firstly select from those applicants who are applying under Single Programme Preference. Thereafter if domestic places are still available, the Committee will select from the group of applicants that have applied to multiple Health Sciences restricted entry programmes.

How do I apply for admission to Physiotherapy?

Application information for admission into the Health Sciences professional programmes is available online at otago.ac.nz/healthsciences.

International applications

Persons who do not hold New Zealand citizenship or permanent residence should address their enquiries to the University's International Office, otago.ac.nz/international.

Career opportunities

The more we learn about how the human body operates, the greater the opportunities there are for qualified physiotherapists to practise and undertake research – not only in New Zealand but around the world.

Physiotherapists are valued for their work in hospitals, aged care facilities, and rehabilitation centres. They are responsible for helping people maintain peak physical condition, as integral members of sports teams, fitness centres, and sports clinics. Others find employment in schools or community care organisations, and many establish their own private practices.

A growing awareness of the importance of keeping workers healthy and productive in today's industrial environment has also created employment opportunities within large companies as occupational health and safety professionals, and in the area of health management.

PROFILE Sequoia Cooper BPhy

As an active person with a passion for health and wellbeing, Sequoia Cooper found the Bachelor of Physiotherapy programme to be a natural fit. Studying at Otago meant she could achieve her goal of being able to help people return to activities and sport, while also enjoying the famous Otago student lifestyle.

Sequoia spent her first year at one of the University's 14 residential colleges, while enrolled in the Health Sciences First Year (HSFY) Programme.

"Health Sciences First Year was challenging, but I found that it set me up well for the following physio-specific years," says Sequoia. Starting in second year, she was interacting with patients "right from the word go."

"The small class size allowed me to get to know everybody in the course. The facilities are modern, and we had access to amazing material in the anatomy department and at the physio school."

As a recent graduate, Sequoia now works at Sportsmed Southland, where she undertook a clinical placement in her fourth year of study. She has an exciting and varied role, working in private practice, at school clinics, and with a premier rugby team.

"In my practice I treat the general public, as well as a lot of elite athletes. I also spend a lot of time communicating with other health professionals."

She notes "the ability to think on my feet and be innovative in my approach to everyday things, is part of physio work," and cites "the ability to interact with many different types of people" as an example of the invaluable skills gained during her studies.

A competitive cyclist herself, Sequoia plans to pursue a career in sports physiotherapy. But this isn't the only option that's open to her, because, as Sequoia explains, "the course is very broad, and sets you up for work in all fields of physiotherapy."



For questions about
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otago.ac.nz/physiotherapy

