

ISSUE 4
July 2026



FOR THE PHYSIO
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PhysioSA MAGAZINE

MORE THAN
JUST SOCKS
#CrazySocks4Docs

CPT1
"THE COURSE THAT
CHANGED
MY CAREER"

SYMPOSIUM
2026 WHAT YOU
NEED TO KNOW



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TEL: 011 615 3170
www.saphysio.co.za

EDITOR:

Chris Barnsley
chrisjb36@gmail.com

ADVERTISING

TEL: 011 615 3170
pr@saphysio.co.za

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If you have ideas or queries regarding submissions, contact the editor.

SASP© HEAD OFFICE:

TEL: 011 615 3170
FAX: 086 559 8237
EMAIL: pr@saphysio.co.za

Unit 4
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Bedfordview

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**SYMPOSIUM 2026**



TAKING PHYSIOTHERAPY INTO THE FUTURE

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SYMPOSIUM 2026

*Taking Physiotherapy
into the Future...*



Healthcare continues to change and change rapidly, and physiotherapists are not exempt from facing this change and the shifting demands that it places on them. That's why the SASP Symposium 2026 – taking place in September – is focussed around the theme “Taking Physiotherapy into the Future”.

The importance of this theme cannot be understated. As Prof. Corlia Brandt, Chair of the SASP Professional Development Portfolio Committee, notes, “The future of physiotherapy depends on our willingness to embrace innovation while remaining grounded in the science and humanity of patient care. This symposium creates an opportunity for our profession to come together, learn from one another and collectively shape the future of physiotherapy in South Africa.”

The two-day symposium, held on 4-5 September 2026, is bringing physiotherapists from all corners of the profession to explore the future of physiotherapy. It aims to be an evidence-based platform that promotes the sharing of information in a meaningful and useful way that develops both the speakers and all those in attendance.

The programme will begin on Friday, 4 September with three pre-symposium streams:

- **The Audit Summit**, sponsored by Garrun CFP and iTOO Special Risks, which is titled "Fraud,

Waste, Abuse & Error: Clinical Governance in Modern Healthcare”;

- **The Future Practice Forum**, themed around "Pain, Movement, Pelvic Health & Performance: A Modern Physio's Approach for South Africa"; and
- **The Youth Indaba**, themed around "Paths, Purpose and Possibility: Making Your Mark – Impact, Influence and Income."

The afternoon programme will feature symposium sessions exploring artificial intelligence, and technology and innovation in healthcare, after which the SASP AGM will take place.

On Saturday, 5 September, the symposium continues with a full scientific programme featuring plenary discussions, roundtable conversations, poster presentations and networking opportunities.

Each of these are designed to inspire, challenge and equip delegates for the future, as well as provide opportunities for collaboration between clinicians, researchers, educators and industry partners.

Overall the symposium programme will explore a range of topics relevant to contemporary physiotherapy practice, including:

- Artificial intelligence, ethics and the responsible use of AI
- Technology in healthcare,
- Clinical excellence across the lifespan,

- Leadership, policy and advocacy,
- Education and the future workforce,
- Equity and community health, and
- The National Health Insurance.

The symposium is a high-profile and important event for the SASP and its physiotherapists, and well-worth attending.

As Dr Natalie Benjamin-Damons, President of the South African Society of Physiotherapy, said, "The SASP Symposium 2026 represents an important opportunity for our profession to come together, share knowledge and explore the future of physiotherapy in South Africa. As

healthcare continues to evolve, it is essential that physiotherapists remain engaged in the conversations shaping clinical practice, education, leadership and innovation, ensuring that we continue to deliver the highest standard of care to the communities we serve."

Registrations are open for the SASP Symposium 2026, held at Birchwood Hotel & OR Tambo Conference Centre. 

For more information, to view the programme, or to register, [click](#) the image below.



TAKING PHYSIOTHERAPY

INTO THE FUTURE

 4-5 September 2026
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Prof. Ushotanefe Useh is a multidisciplinary academic, clinician and educator, Prof. Useh holds qualifications across the fields of law, education, management and physiotherapy. He is the Deputy Dean for Community Engagement and Stakeholder Relations in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the North-West University and a fellow of the Higher Education Academy of the United Kingdom. Prof. Useh is also the Chairperson of the Academic Subcommittee of Universities South Africa's Higher Education Sustainability Community of Practice (HESCoP). At the recent World Physiotherapy Africa Region Conference, Prof. Useh was honoured with the prestigious 2026 World Physiotherapy Region Award for outstanding contributions to physiotherapy, higher education, research and public health across the African continent.

You have lived and worked across several African countries. How has that journey shaped your understanding of physiotherapy and healthcare on the continent?

My experience of living and working across several African countries has significantly shaped my understanding, practice and teaching of physiotherapy. It has reinforced the importance of internationalisation for me while also highlighting the need for contextual and cultural relevance in healthcare delivery.

I believe strongly that physiotherapy in Africa must have an “African flavour”, much like the distinct identities seen in Chinese, European or American systems. Cultural diversity plays a critical role in shaping healthcare practices, and this awareness has deepened my appreciation of inclusive education. An ideal international curriculum should support the learning needs of all students, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, culture, social class or gender. It should promote social inclusion, cultural pluralism and global citizenship.

Looking back to your early days as a physiotherapist, what challenges facing the profession in Africa concerned you most, and how have those challenges changed over time?

One of the major challenges I observed early in my career was the lack of a distinct professional identity for physiotherapy. The discipline was often misunderstood or blended with other professions.

There has been a positive shift over time, but challenges remain. Physiotherapy must strengthen its identity by grounding practice in evidence-based theories unique to the profession. Unfortunately, we have seen a drift away from core strengths such as family-centred care and rehabilitation toward excessive medicalisation. Our specialisations should remain rooted in cardio-neuro-

musculoskeletal contributions to physical health and wellness.

Your career spans clinical practice, research, teaching and academic leadership. Was there a defining moment when you realised your impact could extend beyond individual patient care?

A defining moment came when I served as the team physiotherapist for a national soccer team. While I occupied that position, I realised

as an academic leader. What motivated your transition from clinician to educator and researcher?

My transition into academia was driven by a desire to contribute to knowledge creation. I wanted to generate evidence that could shape physiotherapy practice through research and my scholarly writing.

You have supervised and mentored numerous students



that therapeutic exercise is not limited to passive clinical use but can be effectively applied in prevention and management of various conditions when properly prescribed and managed using the Frequency, Intensity, Time and Type principles for both conditioned and non-conditioned individuals. I have since used and shared this approach in different populations

Many physiotherapists know you

and emerging academics. What gives you the greatest satisfaction when developing the next generation of physiotherapy leaders?

One of my greatest professional satisfactions is seeing former students excel as global and continental leaders in both clinical practice and academia. It is particularly rewarding to witness their strong critical thinking abilities and transferable skills in action.

Physiotherapy in Africa continues to face challenges around access, workforce development and recognition. Where do you believe the profession has made the greatest progress during your career?

Significant progress has been made in physiotherapy education across the continent. More universities now offer physiotherapy programmes, which has expanded access and capacity.

However, there is still a need to define an “African identity” in training. We must ask:

- What unique competencies do

influence. It should be interprofessional, innovative and focussed on solving real community challenges.

Frameworks such as the African Union Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide valuable guidance for impactful research.

This award recognises your contribution to physiotherapy, higher education and public health. Of all your achievements, which contribution are you personally most proud of?

There is great potential for collaboration across African physiotherapy organisations, universities and clinicians

African-trained physiotherapists possess?

- What can the world learn from our institutions?

Additionally, our training must further strengthen communication, innovation, leadership and management skills as essential transferable competencies.

What role do research and evidence generation play in strengthening the voice and influence of physiotherapy across Africa?

Research plays a crucial role in strengthening the profession's

I am particularly proud of my work in rural African communities, including Francophone regions, where I have applied physiotherapy approaches to prevent and manage lifestyle diseases.

What opportunities do you see for greater collaboration between African physiotherapy organisations, universities and clinicians in the coming decade?

There is great potential for collaboration across African physiotherapy organisations, universities and clinicians, but what stands out the most are multi-country, interprofessional projects that are focussed on innovative

approaches to preventing and managing lifestyle diseases in rural Africa. These could have a real transformative impact.

As someone who has dedicated much of your career to advancing physiotherapy in Africa, what advice would you give to young physiotherapists who aspire to become leaders, researchers and change-makers?

My advice to emerging physiotherapists is:

- Remain committed to professionalism, ethics, and legal standards,

- Practice compassion (treat every individual with dignity and as a whole person),
- Commit to lifelong learning and science-guided care,
- Draw inspiration from your patients' resilience,
- Advocate for mobility as a fundamental human right,
- Embrace interprofessional teamwork,
- Collaborate effectively with colleagues, and
- Think globally (see the world as your arena for leadership and practice). 



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THE COURSE THAT *Changed* MY CAREER: AND WHY I KEEP COMING BACK

ALISON LUPTON-SMITH

There is a version of my career that never happened. In that version, I stayed in the lane I thought was assigned to me. I was competent, well-meaning and going through the motions, not knowing that I was missing something. At the time, I did not yet know what was possible.

Then I completed Cardiopulmonary Physiotherapy 1 (CPT1), and my trajectory changed.

Most courses deliver information,

some deliver insight, but only very rarely does a course deliver the thing that actually matters, a shift in how you see yourself and your community.

At the time I enrolled, I was relatively fresh out of community service, and I must admit that I felt a little out of my depth in practice. I never, in my wildest dreams, thought of myself as someone who would thrive as a cardiopulmonary physiotherapist.

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

— Maya Angelou

Working in the area shone a light on the knowledge and skills I had, and it especially shone a light on the gaps I had in both.

I signed up to CPT1 because of this realisation. I knew that if I wanted to do better, I needed to know better. Beyond all of that, I don't think there is anyone who would not want to be taught by the gurus in the field. What I got was something far more than what I thought I'd signed up for.

Why It Stuck

I have done a lot of professional development over the years, and,

honestly, most of it was useful in the moment but forgotten within a month.

CPT1 stuck differently, not because of the content alone, but because it put me in conversation with people who were wrestling with the same problems I was. That kind of learning, I've found, does not just inform you, but also changes how you think.

In addition to that, I felt a particular kind of discomfort that good education produces. It was the discomfort of realising that the way I had been operating was

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incomplete. Crucially, though, CPT1 produced more than that discomfort in me, and it gave me the tools I needed to move forward and do something with it.

What the Course Actually Teaches

CPT1 is not a passive learning experience. It does not hand you a framework and send you home. From the first module, it puts you to work on real problems, in real contexts, alongside people who are navigating the same terrain you are.

The course took us deeper into the foundations of what we do, far deeper than anything we had done in undergrad. I learned the importance of “the why”: not just what to do, but the reasoning behind it.

It demanded that we think critically about the people we serve, examine our own assumptions, and take responsibility, not just for the work, but for the change we are trying to create.

What Changed for Me

After CPT1, I was transformed. I no longer practiced in the realm of comfort by doing what had been done before. I thought critically about each person in front of me and what was possible in my treatment of them. CPT1 ignited my curiosity, and what followed was the beginning of my journey to answer the questions that burned within me, so I could improve my care and service to others.

That transformation would not have happened without the course.

Over time, those changes compounded. The leaders I met in my cohort became colleagues, mentors and collaborators (even 15 years later!). The way I approached problems shifted. The scope of what I thought I could influence expanded, and, at some point, I realised that the version of my career I was enjoying was substantially better, more purposeful, more effective and more connected to the things I actually cared about, than the one I might have had otherwise.

Real, practical education changes the trajectory of your life.

Why I Remain Connected to This Work

I came back to CPT1 not as a student, but as someone who wanted to be part of what it offers others because the thing I gained was more than personal improvement. It gave me skills and a new paradigm, but it also gave me something relational and communal, and I believe that gives you an obligation.

The communities we live and work in need people who are equipped to lead change from within. We need insiders with both the understanding and the tools to build something different. CPT1 develops those people. It has done so for over 20 years, and the evidence of that is visible in the

organisations, initiatives, and communities that its graduates have gone on to shape.

Where the Course Is Today

I should be transparent: I am no longer just a graduate of this course. I am – as I hinted at earlier – now part of the team that shapes it. That may give you reason to read what I'm saying with some scepticism, but I must say that I mean what I say. I can also speak with insight because I've seen how the course has evolved to be even better than when I took it and it changed my life.

The CPT1 of today is not the course I graduated from. It has been rebuilt around the feedback from graduates, the changing disease and healthcare landscape, and the evolution of technology and improved access to information. The problem-based learning that defined my experience is still at the core, but the cases are sharper, the community integration is deeper and the explicit focus on developing agents of change, not just clinicians, has become a central concern.

For clinicians, that means it is a course that takes your clinical reasoning seriously and pushes it further than you expect. For the organisations and communities those clinicians serve, it means something more. It has created a pipeline of practitioners who come back from this course asking different questions and taking on different roles, all of which makes a significant difference to the

communities they serve.

If you are considering this course, or if you are reading this because you are at some version of the crossroads I was at, I want to say something plainly: do not wait for the perfect moment. That moment never comes, and the course will meet you where you are. What it will ask is that you show up willing to be challenged, willing to reflect and willing to act.

If you take on the challenge, the career you could have, the one with direction, impact and a genuine connection to something larger than a job description, is on the other side, just waiting for you. 

Alison Lupton-Smith is a graduate of CPT1 and a CPT1 convenor. She is also a Senior Lecturer at Stellenbosch University, and serves as the Chairperson of the Special Interest Groups on the SASP NEC.

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MORE THAN JUST SOCKS

Why #CrazySocks4Docs Matters to Physiotherapy

DALE LINSTRÖM

On the first Friday of June each year, something small yet meaningful happens in healthcare. Enter any place where healthcare takes place and you'll notice bright flashes of colour flitting just above the ground and all sorts of mismatched patterns being flaunted on the ankles of doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, surgeons and healthcare professionals of all stripes.

#CrazySocks4Docs is carried out in a light-hearted manner, but the

message is anything but that. The initiative highlights the mental health challenges faced by healthcare professionals around the world and is aimed at helping to break the stigma around speaking about it.

Recent reporting on South Africa's healthcare workforce highlights the scale of the issue. Many young professionals are experiencing high levels of stress, emotional exhaustion and burnout while working in under-resourced and

high-pressure environments.

Why This Matters for Physiotherapy

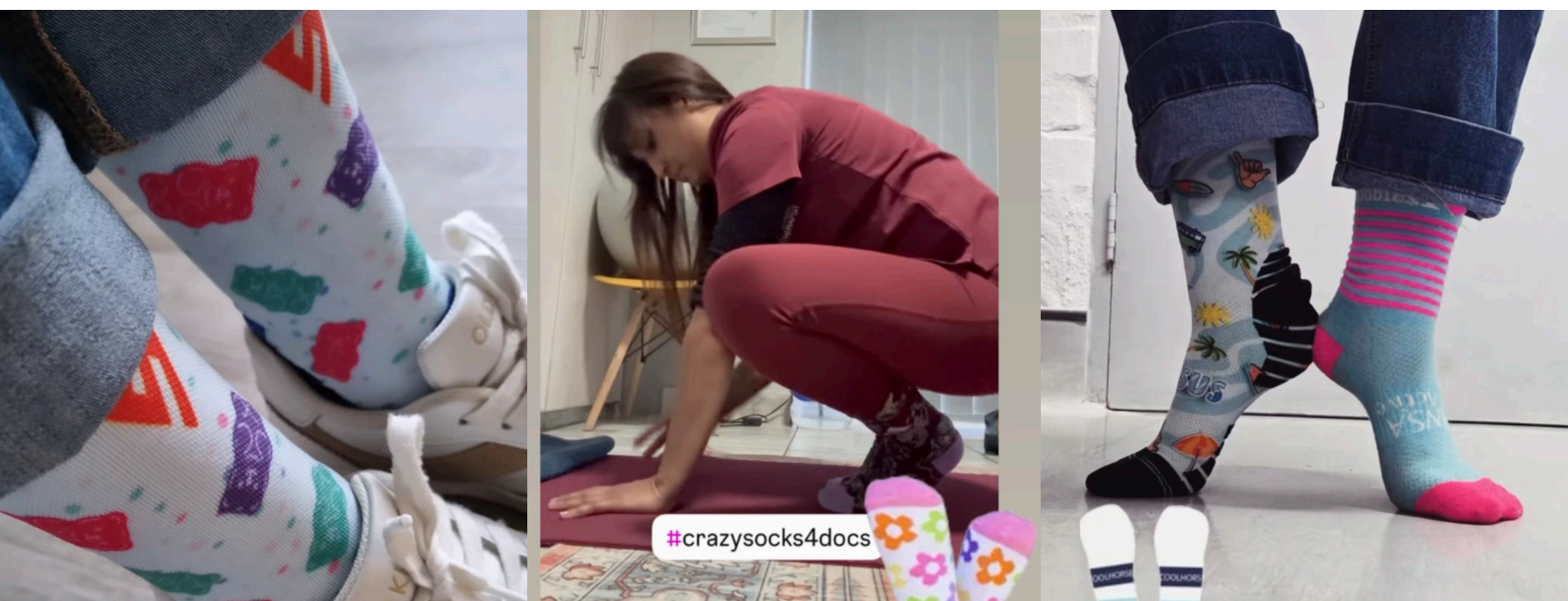
Although much of the narrative often focuses on doctors and nurses, physiotherapists face similar pressures, something that we, the Neuromusculo-Skeletal Group (NMSPG), are acutely aware of. We have seen a noticeable increase in physiotherapists being at risk of burnout from feeling overwhelmed and from mental

taking a specific approach, you are falling short in some way.

Over time, this contributes to frustration and fatigue within the profession, and while physiotherapists keep showing up for their patients, they carry these challenges with them as they do it.

The Power of a Simple Idea

#CrazySocks4Docs was created to break the silence that often surrounds mental health in



fatigue and uncertainty.

Physiotherapy is currently in a period of change. There are ongoing global debates around manual therapy, evolving evidence and shifting expectations of care. At the same time, social media has amplified the volume of information available to patients and clinicians alike. We are constantly exposed to new techniques, opinions and trends, all of which is often accompanied by the message that if you are not

healthcare. It encourages open conversations and reminds professionals that seeking support is not a weakness.

In South Africa, the initiative has become a visible way to acknowledge the realities of working in healthcare. It creates an opportunity for connecting with other healthcare professionals who can see the problem, and promotes a shared understanding about it in environments where

vulnerability is not always encouraged.

Wearing colourful socks on this day, then, is more than a symbolic act. It is a signal to colleagues about a serious issue and is a call for mental health issues to be recognised and supported. Most importantly, it starts a

and experience levels are navigating burnout while continuing to care for others, and if left unaddressed, these challenges will affect both individual physiotherapists and the sustainability of the profession as a whole.

#CrazySocks4Docs offers a



conversation.

Why NMSPG Chose to Lead

The NMSPG feels a responsibility to create space for these conversations within physiotherapy.

We could not ignore what we are observing. Professionals of all ages

practical way to respond. It is simple to take part in, visible across settings and conveys a powerful message.

By spearheading this initiative, our aim is clear. We want our members and colleagues to know that they are supported and valued and that they are not alone.

A Community That Showed Up

We feel that the response from the physiotherapy community was remarkable.

We saw our colleagues, from the southern-most tip of the Western Cape to the far north, embrace the initiative across clinics, hospitals and practices. There was colour and creativity throughout the profession and, most importantly, connection.

This level of engagement highlights that there is a real need within our profession for spaces that acknowledge the human experience behind clinical roles.

Looking Beyond One Day

While #CrazySocks4Docs takes place on a single day, we believe its message should extend far beyond it.

Burnout in healthcare is not simply an individual experience. It affects



THANK YOU!

TO EVERYONE
WHO JOINED US
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#CRAZYSOCKS4DOCS



#CRAZYSOCKS4DOCS



physiotherapists, those around them and even impacts the level of care we can provide. Beyond that, it reflects broader challenges within the systems in which we work, and the expectations placed on healthcare professionals.

Our hope is that we embrace each

other's humanity and offer support to our colleagues around us.

A Final Thank You

To every physiotherapist, student and colleague who took part, thank you for showing up, wearing your socks and contributing to a conversation that matters! 

BEYOND

COMMUNITY

SERVICE:

NAVIGATING THE TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENT PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTITIONER IN SOUTH AFRICA

country's healthcare needs. However, there is an important and often under-addressed question that arises from it: What happens after community service?

PHETO MOUMAKOE-MODINGWANA

In South Africa, the journey to becoming a qualified physiotherapist does not end at graduation. A compulsory year of community service, mandated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa, serves as a critical bridge between academic training and professional practice.

During this period, newly qualified physiotherapists are placed within public healthcare institutions by the Department of Health, where they work under supervision, refine their clinical competencies, and contribute to addressing the

The Reality Beyond Community Service

While community service equips physiotherapists with essential clinical skills, transitioning into independent practice also introduces a new set of complexities.

For one thing, after completing the community service year, physiotherapists are expected to function with increased autonomy, but they also have to make critical career decisions while navigating a professional landscape that is liable to be unfamiliar to them.



Uncertainty is often the dominant feature of being a junior physiotherapist. It is difficult finding employment and questions relating to the direction of their career, the possibility and viability of private practice, and one's financial wellbeing become increasingly pressing and important.

They might be prepared for clinical practice and *au fait* with the latest research, but that does not mean that physiotherapists step out of community service fully prepared for the non-clinical demands of the profession such as business management, medical aid coding, ethical billing practices and personal financial planning.

This gap between clinical competence and professional readiness has broader implications for both individuals and the profession. Without the right support, this early-career uncertainty and pressure can contribute to burnout, negative mental health and poor career decisions, all of which affect quality of life.

Furthermore, it even has the possibility of leading to people leaving the profession, which ultimately affects the sustainability of the physiotherapy workforce in South Africa.

Bridging the Gap: A Strategic Response

The South African Society of Physiotherapy (SASP), through its Private Sector Group (PSG), has taken a proactive approach to supporting young professionals during this critical transition phase. We host "The Youth Indaba" which



is designed to equip physiotherapists in the early stages of their career with the knowledge and skills needed to successfully navigate life beyond community service. The event also provides vital networking opportunities which has the potential to open doors in the future. This year, the event will be held on 4 September at Symposium 2026.

The Youth Indaba: A Platform for Growth and Connection

The Youth Indaba should be thought of as a strategic platform for engagement and learning that has the potential to empower a new physiotherapist rather than

simply being another professional event. It brings together a diverse group of experienced physiotherapists and industry leaders who have successfully navigated different career pathways. These include professionals from sports physiotherapy, academia, hospital leadership, private practice and professional governance structures.

Through a combination of presentations, panel discussions and networking opportunities,

Through Early-Career Support

The SASP's commitment to the growing of the profession, is reflected not only in the indaba but also in its ongoing initiatives. These include mentorship programmes, clinical coding support, interactive engagement sessions such as "Coffee with PSG" and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities to ensure practitioners remain compliant with HPCSA requirements. These initiatives are important because they contribute to building a more confident, informed and

They might be prepared for clinical practice and *au fait* with the latest research, but that does not mean that physiotherapists step out of community service fully prepared for the non-clinical demands of the profession

participants will gain practical insights into key areas such as:

- Career pathing in a complex and evolving healthcare environment
- Financial literacy, including budgeting, banking and long-term planning
- Private practice setup and sustainable management
- Ethical engagement with industry stakeholders, including medical representatives

Strengthening the Profession

ethically grounded group of physiotherapists that is better equipped to meet the demands of South Africa's evolving healthcare system.

Conclusion

The transition from community service to independent practice represents a pivotal moment in the career of every physiotherapist. It is a period filled with both opportunity and uncertainty. Without structured support, many young professionals may struggle

to find their footing. However, if they are given the right guidance and resources, as well as high quality networking opportunities, they can navigate this transition point in a way that gives them the best chance of achieving long-term success in their careers.

As the physiotherapy landscape continues to evolve, initiatives that prioritise early-career development will be essential in ensuring that the profession not only survives but thrives.

Ultimately, the question for us is: How well are we preparing our young professionals for what comes next?

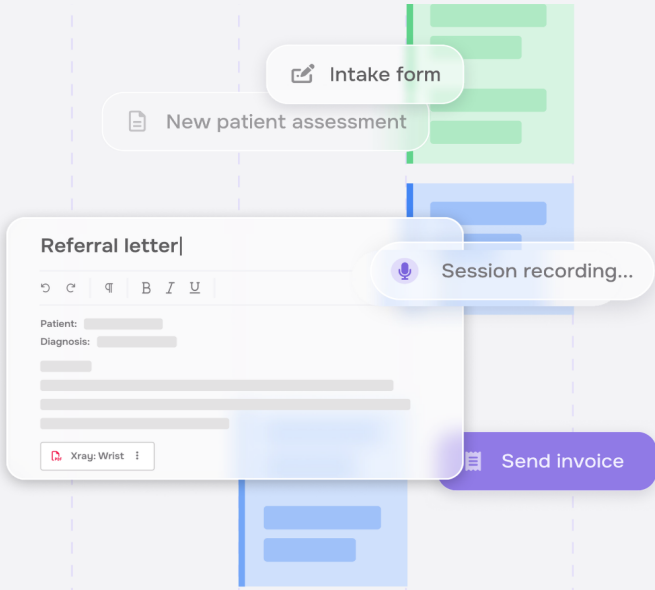
For now, the Youth Indaba is an important response to this question, and Youth Indaba 2026 is a timely opportunity for young physiotherapists to gain the tools they need to face their immediate challenges, as well as help them cast and chase their vision for their futures.🌐

For more information about the Youth Indaba email privatesect.deputychair@saphysio.co.za



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SANDY LORD

Evidence-based practise is essential for physiotherapists, but to make our practise evidence-based, we need quick and reliable access to high-quality research. The Physiotherapy Evidence Database (better known as PEDro) was developed to meet this need.

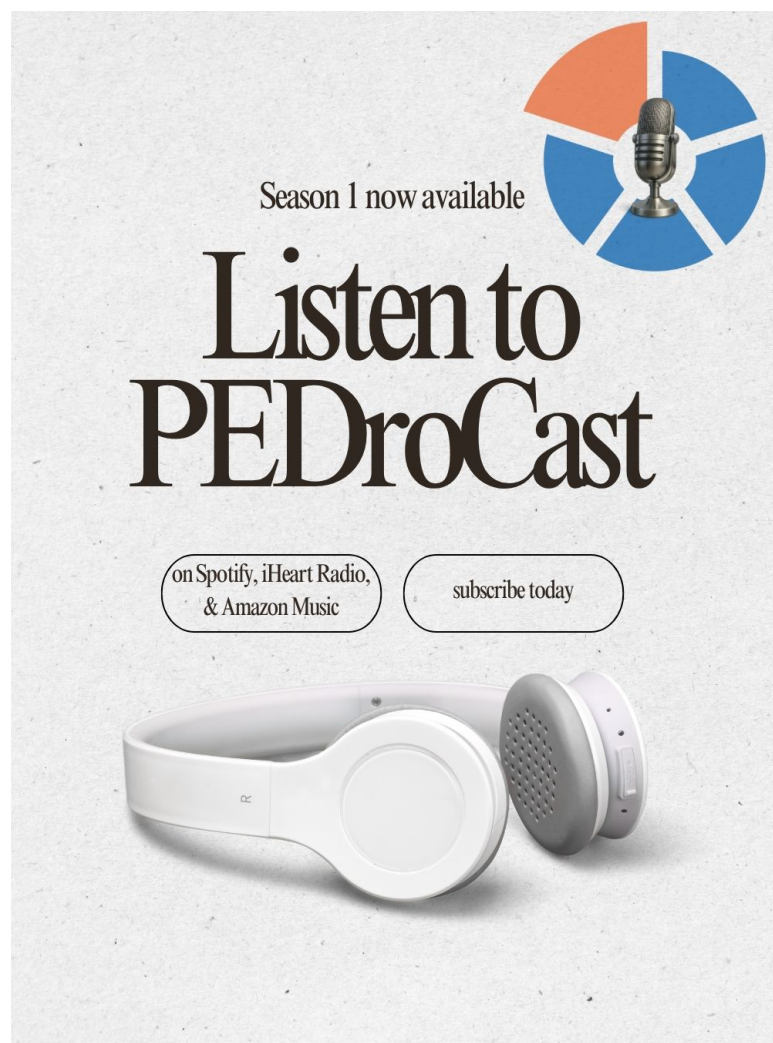
PEDro is a free online database that brings together thousands of research studies specifically related to physiotherapy, including randomised controlled trials, systematic

reviews, and clinical practice guidelines. Its primary aim is to support clinicians, educators and researchers by providing rapid access to the best available evidence on the effectiveness of physiotherapy interventions.

The focus on physiotherapy makes it distinct from databases such as PubMed and Web of Science and helps physiotherapists save time because they do not have to worry about irrelevant studies from other fields populating the search results. This does not mean that the database is thin or deficient in any way; In fact, some of the physiotherapy-specific research indexed in PEDro may not be fully represented in broader databases, but it does reduce the frustration and point of friction that comes from finding studies from other fields in one's search results.

Another important aspect of PEDro is its focus on quality and relevance. Unlike general medical databases that include a wide range of study types, PEDro selectively indexes studies that use rigorous research designs which ensures that users are accessing reliable evidence. Additionally, PEDro includes a feature called the PEDro scale to make searching more powerful and efficient. The PEDro scale provides a rating of

the methodological quality of clinical trial which helps physiotherapists identify valid and clinically useful studies faster and makes it more likely that good quality and useful research will reach the hands that will use it to make a difference in people's lives.



The database offers the standard “simple search” for quick queries and advanced search” for more precise results, and searches can be made by condition, intervention, body region or study type which makes it easier and faster to find specific information.

An additional feature of PEDro is the “consumer search” which allows patients and the general public to search the database.

It's worth noting that because PEDro is a database, it does not always provide access to full-text articles. Rather, it provides abstracts and links to original sources, so literature even if it does not always give access to the full articles it's a convenient starting point for locating relevant.

PEDro also offers additional learning resources such as its PEDroCast podcast, which



features interviews with physiotherapists, summaries of key studies and discussions on how physiotherapists can best interpret research and apply it in clinical practice. These resources are designed to help clinicians build confidence in using evidence and overcome common barriers such as limited time or difficulty understanding research methods.

Ultimately, PEDro helps physiotherapists find useful and relevant research faster with fewer frustrations. It is, then, a valuable tool that makes evidence-based practise more accessible and easier to achieve, something that benefits physiotherapists and the patients we serve.

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