

# CAHE JC Critically Appraised Article Summary

## Journal Club Details

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**Date of submission** 2007  
**Journal Club location** Southern Cross  
**JC Facilitator** Jane Campbell

### Clinical Scenario

When would treatment effects be expected to plateau / no further improvement be reasonably expected? (Maintenance physiotherapy)

### Review Question/PICO/PACO

When would treatment effects be expected to plateau / no further improvement be reasonably expected? (Maintenance physiotherapy)

[PICO format did not lend itself to topic; however population of interest – if possible to obtain a relevant article – was community dwelling elderly (>60 years)]

### Article/Paper

Flanagan T & Green S 2000, '*The concept of maintenance physiotherapy*', Australian Journal of Physiotherapy, 46(4), 271-278

**Article Methodology:** \* Mixed methods

**Returned JC on:** 30 October 2007

**By CAHE staff member:** Mat Prior

\*NB: This study performed both a systematic literature review and used expert consensus opinion to define concept guidelines for 'maintenance physiotherapy'. Cross-sectional study of treating physiotherapists was also used. However, no articles were found within the systematic review, and only the expert opinion informed the results. Within the available appraisal tools, there is no provision for appraisal of expert consensus opinion. Thus, for the appraisal of this article, the appraisal tool for cohort studies was modified (treating the expert group as a cohort); however it is acknowledged that some categories may not be applicable.



Ques No.	Yes	Can't Tell	No	Comments
1	✓			The study addressed a clearly focussed issue, in that it "...aimed to firmly establish a consensus definition of maintenance physiotherapy, and then assess and analyse the differences between the consensus definition and the definition of maintenance physiotherapy volunteered by physiotherapists treating non-catastrophic transport accident victims" (p272). The specific nature of the population seen by the treating physiotherapists (non-catastrophic transport accident victims) should be noted.
2	✓			Based on the aim and research question outlined above, the methods used in this study appear appropriate. The authors endeavoured to perform a systematic review – a high level research design – to inform their study, however no studies were identified.
3		✓		With regard to the consensus group, the intent to recruit participants with clinical/academic standing gives credence to the 'expert' group, however we are not told what criteria constituted having high clinical/academic standing, and whether or not these 11 participants were the intended participants, or whether some of those who were originally targeted did not choose to participate. With regard to the treating physiotherapists, clear criteria for selection are provided (Table 1, p273), however it is not clear as to whether this was a sample taken randomly or one that incorporated all potential participants.
4				N/A: (No exposure)
5	✓			In terms of the agreement between maintenance physiotherapy definition and concepts between the expert group and treating physiotherapists, simple analysis was performed by matching treating physiotherapists' responses to the previously defined criteria (as per Figure 1). No information is provided as to the reliability/validity of the interview technique used to elicit information from the physiotherapists, however it was stated that it was pilot to achieve standardisation. Subjects and assessors were not blinded, however in this study, as there was no direct 'treatment' and 'comparison' groups, this is not considered to be a problem.
6	✓			As this was a study seeking participants opinions, rather than an experimental study or a study investigating specific risk factors, the concept of 'potential confounding factors' perhaps has less influence. However, it has correctly been acknowledged that interviewer/variations in interview technique (Discussion: p.275) could influence the responses.
7				N/A: There was no follow-up of subjects, however it was not the intent of the study to do so.

Ques No.	Yes	Can't Tell	No	Comments
8				<p>The expert consensus group came up with several definitions of maintenance physiotherapy (p.273-274), which were then developed into a criterion list for continuing treatment (Table 2, p.273)</p> <p>Notably, some key definitions of maintenance physiotherapy, and its justification, included:                      - "Maintenance physiotherapy is fully justifiable if...there still occurs a significant deterioration in their condition."                      - "Without measurable outcome effects, maintenance physiotherapy is not justifiable."                      - "All other avenues of management (including non-physiotherapy interventions) as well as the best efforts of the patient [are] tried and exhausted."                      (pp.273-4)</p> <p>Of the treating physiotherapists, there was most agreement that maintenance physiotherapy is justified when 'The patient is not at best outcome and demonstrably worsens without treatment' (70.3%) and that 'The patient exhibits decreased function and quality of life' (62.6%), whilst maintenance physiotherapy '...may or may not include hands-on treatment' (65.9%), but that 'There is a self-management component to the management plan' (51.6%)</p>
9				No confidence intervals or detailed statistical information is provided; however their use would be questionable.
10				N/A: The results provide a guide as to what circumstances maintenance physiotherapy may be appropriate in, and what may constitute maintenance physiotherapy.
11	✓			<p>It is considered that the results can be applied to the local population, as this was a study conducted in Australia (&amp; NZ), with the expert consensus group consisting of members from all mainland states. Whilst treating physiotherapists used in the second phase of the study treated Victorian patients specifically, it is not considered that their perceptions would differ markedly from those physiotherapists in other major centres.</p> <p>However, it should be noted that this study primarily, although not exclusively, dealt with maintenance physiotherapy in the context of MVA patients. As such, whether the concepts remain as applicable to the community dwelling elderly population (the preferred patient population of interest specified by the journal club) is unclear.</p>
12		✓		There appears to be a relative lack of evidence regarding this topic; indeed the systematic review conducted by the authors yielded no results, and the authors argue that there is no clear consensus on either definition or justification of maintenance physiotherapy.