

Geriatric Physiotherapy Clinical Practice Workbook for Students





Authors

Asha Wettasinghe - University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

KRM Chandrathilaka - University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Kaveera Senanayake - University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sabela Rivas Neira - University of A Coruña, Spain

Jamile Vivas Costa - University of A Coruña, Spain

Consortium CAPAGE

1. University of Applied Sciences FH JOANNEUM, Austria
2. JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Finland
3. Santa Maria Health School, Portugal
4. University of A Coruña, Spain
5. Eastern University, Sri Lanka
6. General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka
7. University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
8. University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka
9. University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
10. University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka



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Introduction

Welcome to Your Geriatric Physiotherapy Clinical Journey

This workbook serves as your essential companion throughout your geriatric physiotherapy clinical placement, designed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world practice. As you embark on this specialized area of physiotherapy, you will discover that working with elderly clients requires a unique blend of clinical expertise, compassionate care, and adaptive thinking that sets geriatric practice apart from other physiotherapy specializations.

Prerequisites: Your Theoretical Foundation

Before engaging with this clinical workbook and entering geriatric physiotherapy practice placements, you have successfully completed comprehensive theory and practice sessions within the Applied Physiotherapy stream. This foundational knowledge forms the cornerstone upon which your clinical learning will build, ensuring you enter practice settings with the essential conceptual understanding required for safe, effective, and evidence-based geriatric care.

Through your Applied Physiotherapy coursework, you have developed thorough understanding of age-related physiological changes across all body systems and geriatric-specific conditions including osteoporosis, sarcopenia, cognitive decline, and balance disorders. You have mastered specialized assessment tools, outcome measures, and evidence-based intervention strategies tailored for elderly populations, including exercise prescription principles, fall prevention protocols, and functional rehabilitation techniques.

Your studies have addressed the psychosocial aspects of aging and ethical considerations unique to geriatric practice, including autonomy, capacity assessment, and quality of life determinations. This knowledge prepares you to address the whole person and navigate complex ethical dilemmas with elderly patients and their families.

This solid theoretical foundation ensures that you enter clinical practice as a prepared student ready to apply established knowledge in real-world settings. Your clinical experience will build upon this base, allowing you to see how concepts translate into practice and how theoretical knowledge must be adapted to individual patient circumstances.

Purpose and Scope of This Workbook

This workbook is structured to help you systematically integrate classroom learning with clinical experiences. It provides frameworks for reflection, assessment guides, and practical tools that will enhance your learning during patient encounters. Rather than simply documenting experiences, this workbook encourages deep analysis and critical thinking about the complex presentations you will encounter in geriatric settings.

Beyond clinical skills, this workbook supports your development as a healthcare professional who understands the multifaceted nature of aging. You will explore not only the physical aspects of geriatric physiotherapy but also the psychological, social, and ethical dimensions that make this field both challenging and rewarding.

The workbook provides structured opportunities to apply evidence-based practice principles in geriatric settings, helping you develop skills in critically evaluating research, adapting interventions based on current evidence, and contributing to the growing body of knowledge in geriatric rehabilitation.

Learning Environment

Unlike other clinical placements where patients may present with single-system problems, geriatric patients typically present with multiple, interconnected health challenges. Your patients may have combinations of musculoskeletal disorders, cardiovascular conditions, cognitive changes, sensory impairments, and psychosocial factors that all influence their rehabilitation potential and outcomes. Geriatric physiotherapy rarely occurs in isolation. You will work alongside physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, dietitians, social workers, and other healthcare professionals. This workbook will help you understand your role within this team and develop skills in collaborative care planning and communication.

Geriatric physiotherapy occurs across various settings including acute care hospitals, rehabilitation centers, long-term care facilities, community health centers, and patients' homes. Each setting presents unique challenges and opportunities that will broaden your understanding of how physiotherapy services can be adapted to meet elderly clients where they are.

Key Learning Objectives

Throughout your clinical experience, this workbook will guide you toward achieving several essential competencies:

- You will develop expertise in conducting comprehensive assessments that account for the complex, multi-system nature of aging-related conditions. This includes learning to use specialized assessment tools, adapting standard measures for elderly populations, and integrating findings from multiple sources to create accurate clinical pictures.
- The workbook provides frameworks for developing treatment plans that are both evidence-based and individually tailored to elderly clients' unique needs, preferences, and circumstances. You will learn to balance therapeutic goals with safety considerations, motivation factors, and realistic outcome expectations.
- Working effectively with elderly clients often requires enhanced communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to build therapeutic relationships with individuals who may have complex medical histories, cognitive changes, or emotional challenges related to aging and illness.
- Geriatric practice involves heightened attention to safety considerations including fall prevention, medication interactions, cognitive status changes, and medical instability. This workbook will help you develop systematic approaches to risk assessment and management.

How to Use This Workbook Effectively

Set aside time each day to complete reflection exercises in this workbook. These brief but focused reflections will help you process complex patient encounters, identify learning opportunities, and track your professional development throughout the placement.

Use the structured case study templates to document interesting or challenging patients you encounter. These comprehensive case analyses will serve as valuable learning tools and may contribute to your professional portfolio or future presentations.

This workbook is designed to facilitate meaningful discussions with your clinical supervisors. Use the guided questions and assessment tools to prepare for supervision meetings and to demonstrate your analytical thinking about patient care.

Share selected workbook activities with fellow students to promote collaborative learning. Discussing challenging cases or ethical dilemmas with peers can provide valuable perspectives and support your professional development.

Special Considerations for Geriatric Practice

- **Ageism Awareness**
Throughout your clinical experience, you will develop awareness of ageist attitudes and practices that may negatively impact elderly patients' care. This workbook includes exercises to help you examine your own biases and develop advocacy skills to ensure your elderly clients receive optimal care.
- **Cultural Competence**
Elderly patients come from diverse cultural backgrounds with varying beliefs about aging, illness, and rehabilitation. The workbook provides frameworks for developing cultural competence and adapting your practice to respect and incorporate patients' cultural values and preferences.
- **Ethical Decision-Making**
Geriatric practice frequently involves complex ethical considerations related to autonomy, quality of life, resource allocation, and end-of-life care. This workbook includes structured approaches to ethical analysis and decision-making that will support you in navigating these challenging situations.
- **Family and Caregiver Involvement**
Many elderly patients rely on family members or professional caregivers for support. You will learn to assess caregiver needs, provide education and training, and navigate family dynamics that may impact patient outcomes.

Building Your Professional Identity

Through systematic use of this workbook, you will develop specialized knowledge and skills that distinguish geriatric physiotherapy practice. You will learn to appreciate the unique rewards of working with elderly populations and understand how your contributions can significantly impact quality of life for aging individuals.

Geriatric physiotherapy is a rapidly evolving field with new research, techniques, and approaches emerging regularly. This workbook will help you develop habits of continuous learning and critical thinking that will serve you throughout your career.

As you develop expertise in geriatric care, you will be positioned to advocate for improved services, resources, and policies that benefit elderly populations. The reflective exercises in this workbook will help you identify systemic issues and develop skills in professional advocacy.

Your Journey Begins

As you begin this clinical placement, remember that working with elderly clients is both a privilege and a responsibility. Each patient you encounter has a lifetime of experiences, wisdom, and stories that can enrich your understanding of aging and humanity. Your journey in geriatric physiotherapy will challenge you to think differently, communicate effectively, and practice with heightened awareness of the complex factors that influence aging and health.

This workbook will help you capture not only the clinical learning opportunities but also the personal and professional growth that comes from providing compassionate, skilled care to elderly individuals. Use it as your guide and companion as you develop the specialized skills and professional identity that will enable you to make meaningful contributions to elderly populations throughout your career.

Completion Guidelines

Complete this workbook throughout your 100-hour geriatric physiotherapy clinical placement, utilizing it as a comprehensive learning tool to document and analyze your patient encounters, clinical reasoning, and professional development. In addition to the reference books and annexures provided at the end of this workbook, you may seek assistance from supplementary materials to enhance your understanding and application of geriatric physiotherapy principles during your clinical experience.

Welcome to the rewarding and essential field of geriatric physiotherapy. Your dedication to learning and growing in this area will ultimately benefit countless elderly individuals who deserve access to skilled, compassionate rehabilitation services as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of aging.

SECTION 1: ORIENTATION AND PREPARATION

1.1 Clinical Setting Profile

Placement Information:

- Facility Name: _____



- Setting Type: ☐ Hospital ☐ Long-term Care ☐ Outpatient ☐ Home Care ☐ Other: _____
- Clinical Instructor: _____
- Placement Dates: _____

Facility Resources:

Equipment available	Assessment tools commonly used	Documentation system	Interdisciplinary team members present

1.2 Geriatric Population Self-Assessment

Rate your current knowledge/confidence in the following areas (1=minimal, 5=expert):

Area	Rating	Plan to Improve
Normal aging processes		
Common geriatric conditions		
Geriatric assessment tools		
Falls prevention strategies		
Pain management in older adults		
Assistive device prescription		
Transfer techniques		
Communication with older adults		
Working with patients with dementia		



Ethical considerations in geriatric care		
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1.3 Learning Goals

Identify 3-5 specific learning goals for this clinical placement:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

SECTION 2: PHYSIOTHERAPY INTERVENTIONS AND CLINICAL REASONING

Geriatric Physiotherapy Assessment – Annexure 01

Case Study 01

2.1 Assessment tools

Instructions: After observing and participating in assessments of older adults, complete the following:

Common Assessment Tools (Complete for at least 5 tools you've used) – Annexure 02

Assessment Tool	Purpose	Score Interpretation	Strengths/Limitations	When to Use
Example: Berg Balance Scale	Assess balance and fall risk	0-20: high fall risk >21-40: moderate risk >41-56: low risk	Strengths: Well-validated, quantitative Limitations: Time-consuming, floor effect for very frail	Static balance assessment for mobile patients

Clinical Reasoning Process:

1. What are the main problems identified in your assessment?
2. How do these problems interact with each other?
3. Which problems should be prioritized and why?
4. What are the patient's goals?
5. What environmental or contextual factors need to be considered?

Treatment Plan:

- Short-term goals (1-2 weeks):
- Long-term goals (by discharge):
- Planned interventions:
- Outcome measures to track progress:
- Home program elements:

Reflection: How did your assessment findings directly inform your treatment planning? What would you do differently next time?

2.2 Intervention Implementation Tracker

Instructions: Document your experience implementing different interventions with geriatric patients.

Mobility Interventions Log – Annexure 03

Date	Patient ID	Intervention	Rationale	Patient Response	Modifications Made	What I Learned

Falls Prevention Interventions Log – Annexure 04

Date	Patient ID	Intervention	Rationale	Patient Response	Modifications Made	What I Learned

Pain Management Interventions Log – Annexure 05

Date	Patient ID	Intervention	Rationale	Patient Response	Modifications Made	What I Learned

2.3 Assistive Device and Gait Training Competency Checklist (Annexure 06)

Instructions: Have your clinical instructor observe and sign off on these skills.

Cane	Walker (Standard)	Walker (Rolling)	Wheelchair	Transfer Training	Gait Training
Proper height measurement	Proper height adjustment	Brake mechanism instruction	Proper sizing assessment	Sit-to-stand technique	Balance preparation activities
Gait pattern instruction	Safe maneuvering technique	Safe turning techniques	Pressure relief techniques	Bed to chair transfer	Weight-shifting exercises
Stair training with cane	Transfer with walker	Navigating thresholds	Propulsion technique teaching	Sliding board transfer	Gait initiation techniques
			Caregiver instruction	Car transfer	Obstacle navigation Outdoor mobility

2.4 Intervention Care Analysis

Instructions: Select a patient you've been treating. Document their progress and your clinical reasoning throughout the intervention process.

Patient Background:

- Brief history:
- Initial presentation:
- Treatment goals:

Intervention Timeline:

Session	Interventions Used	Patient Response	Clinical Reasoning for Modifications
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1			
2			
3			
4			

Outcome Measures: Annexure 07

Measure	Initial Score	Midpoint Score	Final Score	Minimal Clinically Important Difference	Clinical Interpretation

Reflection Questions:

1. Were the interventions effective? Why or why not?
2. How did you modify your approach based on the patient's progress?
3. What evidence supports the interventions you selected?

4. What would you do differently if treating a similar patient in the future?

SECTION 3: CLINICAL MANAGEMENT AND ETHICAL PRACTICE

3.1 Complex Geriatric Conditions Management

Instructions: For each complex condition you encounter, complete the following template:

Condition Case Study (Annexure 08)

Condition: ☐ Frailty ☐ Dementia ☐ Parkinson's ☐ Post-stroke ☐ Osteoporosis ☐ Other: _____

Patient Presentation:

- Key symptoms: _____
- Functional limitations: _____
- Safety concerns: _____
- Psychosocial factors: _____

Management Challenges:

- Physical challenges: _____
- Cognitive/communication challenges: _____
- Environmental challenges: _____
- Resource limitations: _____

Intervention Approaches:

- Modified assessment approach: _____
- Adapted intervention techniques: _____
- Special precautions taken: _____



- Interdisciplinary collaborations: _____

Outcome:

- Patient response: _____
- Effectiveness of interventions: _____
- Lessons learned: _____

3.2 Ethical Decision-Making Scenarios

Instructions: Document ethical challenges encountered during your placement and analyze your approach.

Ethical Scenario Analysis (Annexure 09)

Scenario Description: _____

Ethical Issues Identified: _____

Stakeholders Involved: _____

Ethical Principles in Conflict: _____

Options Considered:

1. _____
Pros: _____ Cons: _____
Decision and Rationale: _____
Outcome: _____
Reflection on Process: _____

3.3 Patient Safety Audit

Instructions: Conduct a safety audit on your clinical practice with older adults.

Safety Checklist: (Annexure 10)

Safety Element	Always	Sometimes	Never	Plan for Improvement
I check vital signs before intervention				
I scan the environment for hazards				
I verify patient identity before treatment				
I review precautions and contraindications				
I provide clear safety instructions				
I use proper body mechanics				
I monitor for signs of fatigue or distress				
I document safety incidents promptly				
I use proper infection control procedures				
I ensure proper equipment maintenance				

Near Miss or Safety Incident Analysis:



Describe a safety concern or "near miss" you encountered:

What contributed to this situation?

What preventive measures could be implemented?

How has this changed your practice?

3.4 Patient Comfort Assessment

Instructions: Evaluate your approach to ensuring patient comfort during physiotherapy sessions.

Comfort Strategies Implemented:

Comfort Strategy	Effectiveness	Patient Feedback	Notes for Improvement
Proper positioning techniques			
Pain monitoring and management			
Rest breaks during treatment			
Environmental adaptations (temperature, noise, privacy)			
Clear communication about what to expect			
Adaptations for sensory impairments			
Respect for modesty and dignity			

Reflective Questions:

1. How do you assess patient comfort during sessions?
2. What signs indicate a patient is uncomfortable but not verbalizing it?
3. How have you modified your approach to enhance comfort?
4. How does ensuring comfort impact therapeutic outcomes?

SECTION 4: COMMUNICATION AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY CARE

4.1 Family Education Session Planning

Instructions: Plan, deliver, and evaluate a family education session.

Education Session Plan: (Annexure 11)

Topic: _____

Audience: _____

Goals of Session: _____

Content Outline: _____

Teaching Methods: _____

Materials/Resources Needed: _____

Evaluation Method: _____

Session Delivery Reflection:

Date delivered: _____

Number of attendees: _____

What went well?

What challenges did you encounter?

How did the family members respond?

What would you do differently next time?

How will this education impact patient care?

4.2 Multidisciplinary Case Discussion Documentation

Instructions: Document your participation in multidisciplinary team meetings.

Multidisciplinary Meeting Log (Annexure 12)

Date	Patient Discussed	Team Members Present	Key Issues Raised	PT Contribution	Outcome/Plan	Follow-up Required

Case Presentation Preparation (Annexure 13)

Instructions: Prepare for a case presentation at a multidisciplinary meeting.

Patient Background: _____

Key Assessment Findings to Share:

- Physical: _____
- Functional: _____
- Environmental: _____
- Other: _____

PT Intervention Summary: _____

Progress to Date: _____

Questions for Team Input: _____

Recommendations for Team: _____

Post-Presentation Reflection: _____

4.3 Interprofessional Collaboration Analysis

Instructions: Analyze your collaboration with other healthcare professionals.

Collaboration Log (Annexure 14)

Date	Professional	Patient Situation	Nature of Collaboration	Outcome	What I Learned

Social Worker/Community Care Collaboration

Describe a specific case where you collaborated with social workers or community care teams:

What was the purpose of the collaboration?

How did different perspectives enhance patient care?

What challenges arose in the collaboration?

How were these challenges addressed?

How did this collaboration enhance patient outcomes?

What would improve future collaborations?

SECTION 5: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REFLECTION

5.1 Clinical Skills Self-Assessment (Annexure 15)

Instructions: Complete at the beginning and end of your placement.

Skill Area	Initial Rating (1-5)	Final Rating (1-5)	Evidence of Improvement	Areas for Further Development
Assessment Skills				
Geriatric-specific assessment				
Functional assessment				
Balance assessment				
Pain assessment				
Cognitive considerations				
Intervention Skills				
Treatment planning				
Mobility interventions				
Falls prevention				
Pain management				
Assistive device training				
Management Skills				
Safety management				
Complex case management				
Ethical decision-making				
Documentation				
Discharge planning				
Communication Skills				
Patient communication				
Family education				
Interprofessional communication				
Documentation clarity				
Professional Skills				
Time management				
Professional boundaries				

Self-directed learning				
Evidence-based practice				
Reflective practice				

5.2 Reflective Practice

Instructions: Complete weekly reflections on your clinical experiences.

Weekly Reflection Template (Annexure 16)

Week #: _____ Dates: _____

Clinical Experiences This Week: _____

Key Learning Points: _____

Challenges Encountered: _____

How I Addressed These Challenges: _____

Patient Interaction That Impacted Me: _____

How My Clinical Reasoning Is Developing: _____

Goals for Next Week: _____

5.3 Evidence-Based Practice Application (Annexure 17)

Instructions: Document how you've integrated evidence into your clinical practice.

Clinical Question: _____

Search Strategy:

- Databases searched: _____
- Key terms used: _____
- Inclusion/exclusion criteria: _____

Summary of Evidence Found: _____

Critical Appraisal of Key Evidence: _____

How I Applied This Evidence in Practice: _____

Outcome of Evidence Application: _____

Barriers to Implementing Evidence: _____

Future EBP Goals: _____

Annexures

- Annexure 01: Geriatric Physiotherapy Assessment**
 - Annexure 02: Common Assessment Tools**
 - Annexure 03: Mobility Interventions Log**
 - Annexure 04: Falls Prevention Interventions Log**
 - Annexure 05: Pain Management Interventions Log**
 - Annexure 06: Assistive Device and Gait Training Competency Checklist**
 - Annexure 07: Outcome Measures**
 - Annexure 08: Condition Case Study**
 - Annexure 09: Ethical Scenario Analysis**
 - Annexure 10: Safety Checklist:**
 - Annexure 11: Education Session Plan:**
 - Annexure 12: Multidisciplinary Meeting Log**
 - Annexure 13: Case Presentation Preparation**
 - Annexure 14: Collaboration Log**
 - Annexure 15: Clinical Skills Self-Assessment**
 - Annexure 16: Weekly Reflection Template**
 - Annexure 17: Evidence-Based Practice Application**
 - Annexure 18: Final Clinical Competency Evaluation**
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- Annexure A: Common Geriatric Assessment Tools Reference Guide**
 - Annexure B: Medication Considerations for Physiotherapy**