

Position Paper: Identification, Diagnosis, and Intervention in Physiotherapy for Children with Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)

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Abstract

Background: Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) is a neuro-developmental disorder that affects approximately 5–6% of children aged 5–11. These children experience difficulties acquiring and performing everyday motor skills and often participate less in physical and social activities, which can lower self-esteem. Secondary effects may include reduced physical fitness, obesity, and emotional-social challenges. Common co-occurrences such as ADHD, autism, and learning or language disorders may exacerbate these difficulties.

Rationale: Early identification, diagnosis, and physiotherapy intervention are essential to reduce the disorder's long-term effects and enhance children's function and participation. This position paper, prepared by physiotherapists from the Pediatric Steering Committee of the Israeli Physiotherapy Society, is based on updated research, professional literature, and clinical experience.

Objectives:

1. Enhance motor functions and participation in children with DCD.
2. Provide updated information and recommendations for identifying, diagnosing, monitoring, and treating children with DCD through physiotherapy.
3. Emphasize the importance of early intervention to improve function and quality of life.
4. Increase awareness among physiotherapists, healthcare and education professionals, and families.

Findings: The position paper presents definitions and diagnostic criteria of DCD, key characteristics and motor learning mechanisms, functional challenges, perinatal risk factors and secondary effects, and recommendations for physiotherapy identification, diagnosis, and intervention, followed by key guidelines.

Summary and Conclusions:

This position paper highlights the importance of identifying, diagnosing, and treating children with DCD in physiotherapy. Early and tailored physiotherapy is crucial to prevent secondary complications and support participation of children with DCD throughout life. Further education, research, and professional development in this field are strongly recommended.

Keywords: Developmental Coordination Disorder, Physiotherapy, Child Development, Motor Skills, Motor Learning