**School-based Physical Therapy in Israel**

**Nilly Waiserberg MScPT1,2 , Lidia Shwartz BPT MEd2**

**1**  Tel Aviv university, Sackler faculty of medicine, school of Health Professions, Physical Therapy department

**2**Instructor for Physical Therapy, Ministry of Education, Special Education department

In Israel, children with special needs are entitled physical therapy (PT) services under two different laws by two different ministries. According to Israel's National Health Insurance Law, the Ministry of Health is responsible for the provision of health services in the country. PT is one of the medical services within the basic "health services basket". The healthcare services are provided by one of four Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) (sick funds). Within the basic basket, a citizen can meet a Physical therapist as part of rehabilitation services, or in general acute or chronic services, or within the child development services (Ministry of Health, 1994)1.

Under this law, as part of “child development services”, a child is entitled to receive an unlimited number of therapy sessions up to 3 years of age, 27 sessions a year up to 6 years and 9 sessions per year up to age 9 years. A child with a disability caused by a disease that impairs the central and peripheral nervous system or the musculoskeletal system and causes persistent functional disability is entitled to receive therapy as needed and without limitation up to age 18 years (Ministry of Health, 2002)2.

Children aged 0-3 years with severe disabilities can study in special daycare centers, running by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services. PT services in these centers are sponsored by the Ministry of Health (through the HMOs)3.

The Israeli Special Education Law (SEL) specifies physical therapy (PT) services for children aged 3-21 years, with motor disabilities are provided by the Ministry of Education within education settings: ‘Teaching, studying, therapy and additional services are given according to law, to the child with special needs, including Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech & Language Therapy and other needed services according to one’s need. The frequency, intensity and type of intervention are decided collaboratively by the school team as part of the personal program of the child… according to system abilities’ (Ministry of Education 1988)4.

Children who receive treatment as part of special education do not lose eligibility to receive them from their health services as well. Thus, children with motor disabilities are entitled PT services under two different laws by two different ministries.

School-based PTs are employed by the special education department, the Ministry of Education. Most of PT services are provided in special education schools. There is a great difference between PT services in special-needs schools and in regular, mainstream schools. **In special education schools** PTs are integrated into school teams and collaborate with educators, teachers and with other healthcare services (e.g. Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy) - collaborative teamwork. Practice is guided by the Ecological theory and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF model), and PT is delivered according to child’s needs in different service delivery models (direct, integrated, monitoring act).

There is variation in supplying PT services for children with disabilities that study in **regular schools** - not all of them receive PT at school as part of special related services. The country is divided into 68 districts, each has a different model for supplying PT services, in each district, there is a special education center that is responsible for supplying related services to the regular education schools in its district. There are no PTs who are integrated into regular school teams, the PT service is provided in regular schools as part of the inclusion services provided to a child with disabilities, but it is not always offered. In some cases, there is no PT at all, in other cases PT services are seldom in a consultative model, and sometimes there is individual direct PT intervention. In regular schools, where PT is involved, it is according to caseload model.

מטרת הטיפול הפיזיותרפי במערכת החינוך היא לאפשר לתלמיד למצות את הפוטנציאל שלו כדי שיוכל להשתלב, לתפקד, ללמוד וליהנות מפעילויות פנים וחוץ של המוסד החינוכי בו הוא לומד ומהשתתפות בפעילויות חברתיות עם בני הגיל, בני השווים ובני משפחתו. בישראל לא נעשית הפרדה בין פיזיותרפיה קלינית לפיזיותרפיה במסגרת חינוכית. תפקידי הפיזיותרפיסט בבית הספר מגוונים וכוללים בין השאר: הנגשה והתאמת סביבת הלימודים, התאמה ותרגול ניידות בתוך המסגרת החינוכית ומחוץ לה, עידוד לעצמאות בביצוע מיומנויות יומיום, קידום פעילויות מוטוריות לעידוד השתתפות בפעילויות ספורט ובפעילויות בשעות הפנאי.

**References:**

1. National Health Insurance Law, Ministry of Health, 1994 <https://www.health.gov.il/LegislationLibrary/Bituah_01.pdf>

2. Ministry of Health, 2002 <https://www.health.gov.il/hozer/mr42_2002.pdf>

3. Rehabilitation Day Care Act, Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services, 2000 https://www.health.gov.il/LegislationLibrary/Shikum\_01.pdf

4. Special Education Law, Ministry of Education 1988 https://www.nevo.co.il/law\_html/law01/152\_048.htm