Welsh Physiotherapy Advisory Group

All Wales Evidence Based Guidance for Access to Hydrotherapy for NHS Patients in Wales

December 2016
Contents:

1. Introduction 3

2. Benefits of Hydrotherapy / Aquatic Therapy 3

2.1 Effects of Hydrotherapy / Aquatic Therapy 4

3. Indications for Hydrotherapy / Aquatic Therapy 4

4. Contraindications to Hydrotherapy / Aquatic Therapy 5

4.1 Absolute contraindications 5
4.2 Relative contraindications 5
4.3 Precautions 6
4.4 Considerations 6

5. Statutory Requirements 6

6. NHS Wales Provision of Hydrotherapy / Aquatic Therapy 7


8. References 8

9. Appendix A – Local Provision 12
1. Introduction

The therapeutic uses of water have been described from as early as 2,400 BC (Reid Campion, 1997, Adler, 1993; Irion, 1997). It was not, however, until the 1920’s that exercise in water, rather than immersion alone, began to be developed (Reid Campion, 1997)

This was the origin of hydrotherapy, also known as aquatic physiotherapy, used by Physiotherapy staff within NHS premises. It is provided for the rehabilitation of a range of conditions including musculoskeletal and neurological conditions. It provides an environment to encourage movement & improve function.

Aquatic physiotherapy is defined by the Aquatic Therapy Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (ATACP 2015) as, "A physiotherapy programme utilising the properties of water, designed by a suitably qualified Physiotherapist. The programme should be specific for an individual to maximise function which can be physical, physiological, or psychosocial. Treatments should be carried out by appropriately trained personnel, ideally in a purpose built, and suitably heated aquatic physiotherapy pool"

2. Benefits of Hydrotherapy / Aquatic Therapy

The physical properties and effects of water enable activities to be more easily performed in a pool than on land due to the supportive nature of water, which is 600-800 times more than air. Once learned these skills can be transferred to land and into functional settings enabling patients to achieve their specific outcomes. (McNeal 1997),

In addition, the increased temperature of a hydrotherapy pool, along with the effects of buoyancy, contributes to the effect on pain by acting on the thermal and mechano receptors thus reducing nociceptive input. Hall et al (2008).

Other benefits may include a reduction of manual handling risk to therapist due to ease of handling in the water, the ability to target multiple problems simultaneously. In some cases this may also help with reintegration into use of local community pools to enable long term self management. Improvements that have been observed, but have no research evidence, include better speech production with work on breath control and improvements to sensation, with patients having better awareness of where their body and limbs are in relation to each other.

The efficacy of aquatic physiotherapy has predominantly been studied in musculoskeletal conditions including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, fibromyalgia, hip & knee arthroplasty, acute and chronic low back pain and to a lesser extent, upper and lower limb conditions (Geytenbeek, 2008 and
NSCCAHs, 2008). Anecdotal evidence supports its use for lower limb fractures, ligament repair and shoulder dysfunction. Aquatic therapy’s efficacy has also been studied in neurological conditions, but to a lesser extent due to reasons of complexity of research design, but conditions including stroke, acquired brain injury, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, Gillian Barrie Syndrome, post polio syndrome, cerebral palsy in adults, Parkinson’s Disease are represented in peer review journals.

Effective clinical practice has preceded proof of efficacy in high quality research trials also including paediatric conditions such as juvenile idiopathic arthritis and cerebral palsy.

2.1 Effects of Hydrotherapy/Aquatic Therapy

Detailed research into the physiological effects of immersion in water has resulted from using the medium of water to recreate the effects of weightlessness (Whitelock, 1994). These effects include:


IV. Movement control – grading, co-ordination (Reid Campion, 1997 McNeal 1997)


VI. Improvement in functional activities (Giaquiento et al 2010a, Giaquiento et al 2010b, Reid Campion, 1997, Schencking et al 2013)

VII. Posture, postural control, co-ordination and balance (Reid Campion, 1997 McNeal 1997)


IX. Graded weight-bearing McNeal 1997), (Harrison & Bulstrode 1987)

X. Safe environment to practise tasks (McNeal 1997),

3. Indications for Hydrotherapy / Aquatic Therapy

Include the following but are not exhaustive:

- Management of muscle tone problems
- Reduction in range of movement
- Reduced muscle power
- Decreased balance or loss of postural control

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Dec 2016

4
4. **Contraindications to Hydrotherapy / Aquatic Therapy**

All patients should have a comprehensive assessment, part of which will assess the suitability of the patient for this intervention and will include screening for contraindications and precautions.

These are divided into absolute contraindications, relative contraindications and precautions and acted upon accordingly.

4.1 **Absolute contraindications**

Patients with the following are not suitable to receive hydrotherapy / aquatic therapy:

- Acute systemic illness/pyrexia
- Acute vomiting or diarrhoea
- Medical instability following an acute episode.
- Proven chlorine or bromine allergy
- Resting angina
- Shortness of breath at rest
- Uncontrolled cardiac failure/paroxysmal nocturnal dyspnoea
- Open infected wounds
- Known HIV positive and Hepatitis C patients must not enter the pool during menstruation

4.2 **Relative contraindications**

Patients with the following conditions require further consideration taking into account the risk/benefit analysis, but if hydrotherapy/aquatic therapy is considered this should be done so cautiously:

- Irradiated skin during course of radiotherapy
- Known aneurysm
- Open wounds
- Poorly controlled epilepsy
- Unstable diabetes
- Thyroid deficiency
- Neutropaenia

All Wales Evidence Based Guidance for Access to Hydrotherapy for NHS Patients in Wales/ WPhLAG/ Vers 3/

Dec 2016
4.3 Precautions
Patients with the following may receive hydrotherapy/aquatic therapy but additional precautions may be required

- Incontinence of urine/faeces (see condition of use for pool)
- Gross obesity
- Epilepsy
- Haemophilia
- Widespread MRSA
- Hypotension
- Renal failure
- Poor skin integrity/open/surgical wounds
- Pregnancy if water temperature exceeds 35°C
- Invasive tubes in situ
- Risk of aspiration
- Low calorie intake
- Prone to blackouts
- Sickle cell anaemia
- Inefficient thermoregulation
- Tracheostomy
- Fungal infections
- Previous episodes of dysreflexia
- Fear of water
- Boisterous, unpredictable or aggressive behaviour
- Contact lenses and conjunctivitis
- Hearing aids/grommets
- Impaired sensation/vision/hearing

4.4 Considerations
The following additional factors should be taken into consideration during treatment planning and participation

- Shortness of breath with exertion (unfit vs other causes)
- Vertigo/nausea/Blackouts
- Multiple Sclerosis (esp those with high sensitivity to high temperatures)
- Communication problems
- Dermal sensitivity to sanitising agents/psoriasis
- Verruca/Tinea pedia

5. Statutory Requirements
Provision of hydrotherapy / aquatic therapy must be compliant with the following legislation and statutory requirements

- Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1999
- Care of Substance Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations, 2002
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), 1995

6. NHS Wales Provision of Hydrotherapy / Aquatic Therapy
The following indicates hydrotherapy/ aquatic therapy provision across NHS Wales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UHB</th>
<th>Adult Inpatients</th>
<th>Adult Outpatients</th>
<th>Paediatric Inpatients</th>
<th>Paediatric Outpatients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A B UHB</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABMUHB</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCUHB</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVUHB</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTUHB</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDUHB</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTHB</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each Health Board works to its local Operational Policy for the provision of hydrotherapy / aquatic therapy and also referral processes, training and risk management.

(See Appendix A for specific hydrotherapy services provision for each UHB)

7. Hydrotherapy Provision for Non-NHS Organisations utilising NHS Premises
All Health Boards across Wales would benefit from clarification on the governance framework necessary to ensure that they are acting in a way that best manages risk, mitigation, indemnity and exposure. This is necessary as activities undertaken and supervised by non-NHS contracted individuals/companies or where there is any
process to income generate (such as payment to access the pool) may not be covered by Welsh Risk pool.
8. References:


- Aquatic Therapy association of Chartered Physiotherapists (ATACP). Guidance in Good practice in Aquatic Physiotherapy 2015


• Harrison R & Bulstrode S (1987) Percnetage Weight Bearing during Partial Immersion in the Hydrotherapy Pool Physiotherapy Practice 3, 60-63


Other useful references:

• Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Code of Professional Values and Behaviours (2011)

All Wales Evidence Based Guidance for Access to Hydrotherapy for NHS Patients in Wales/ WPhLAG/ Vers 3/ Dec 2016

• Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (2009) Pregnant Members Hazards Checklist CSP Member Advice Sheet


• Cochrane T, Davey RC & Matthes Edwards SM (2005) Randomised Control Trial of the Cost-Effectiveness of Water-Based Therapy for Lower Limb Osteoarthritis. Health Technology Assessment Vol 9 (3)

• Doig G (2008) Evidence-Based Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of Hydrotherapy in Acute and Chronic Medical Conditions. Report commissioned by NSCCAHS.

• Duffield MH (1976) Exercises in Water. London: Bailleire Tindall & Cassell, 1


• Health Professions Council (2008), Standards of conduct, performance and ethics: Your duties as a registrant, Health Professions Council, London


• Jackson A (2001) Using Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile (MYMOP) in Hydrotherapy. Aqualines. Autumn 8-20

• Maling H (2012) Interventions Under the Microscope. Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Aquatic Physiotherapy iCSP


• Maynard M (2011) Personal communication.

All Wales Evidence Based Guidance for Access to Hydrotherapy for NHS Patients in Wales/ WPhLAG/ Vers 3/

Dec 2016
• Millet R (2011) Water Works. Frontline Vol 17 (8)

• Public Health England (June 2013) “Examining Food Water, and Environmental Samples from Health Care Environments” HPA, London


• Public Health Laboratory Service (1999) Hygiene for Hydrotherapy Pools
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Board</th>
<th>Number of Pools</th>
<th>Location of Pool</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aneurin Bevan UHB</td>
<td>3 (2 adult 1 paediatric)</td>
<td>Nevil Hall Hospital Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr Serranu Children’s Centre - Paeds</td>
<td>YYF new pool has capacity for 8 patients (recent upgrade has included the installation of overhead tracking to enable access for patient with complex physical disabilities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABMUHB</td>
<td>3 + POW uses local leisure centre</td>
<td>Morriston. Singleton - capacity 8 on both sites. Neath Port Talbot- small pool.</td>
<td>POW using leisure facilities – clinical staff feel it is clinically very limiting compared to the hydro pools on other sites. Multiple users other sites, but limitations with access for paeds. Very poor access for learning disability services across whole of South Wales. LD services may access pools in special schools or use Jacuzzi pools in some leisure facilities which have excellent disabled access although do not allow for full treatment programmes to be carried out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff and Vale UHB</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>UHW Rookwood Children’s Hospital for Wales</td>
<td>Following the reorganisation at Rookwood, plans for a large adult pool at Llandough for Neuro in-patients and out-patients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hywel Dda UHB</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Glan Gwilli Hospital, Carmarthen</td>
<td>Pool has capacity for 8 at Glangwili. Local leisure centre pools utilised in Haverfordwest (sessional costs paid by PT service). Paediatric service use pool in schools in Carms &amp; Pembs. Plans for developments in Llanelli as part of the ARCH project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTUHB</td>
<td>1 RGH adult pool</td>
<td>Large 12 person pool in Royal Glam 2 x single use paediatric plunge/Jacuzzi pools RGH 1 x 2 person adult/paeds pool PCH</td>
<td>Larger 5-6 man pool will replace the current 2 man pool in PCH during the Ground Floor essential refurbishment.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 RGH paediatric plunge pool</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 RGH paediatric Jacuzzi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 PCH being decommissioned with the ground floor refurbishment. Replacement pool at PCH has been agreed by Board</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| BCUHB                  | 1 YG Bangor       | Rheumatology MSK (incl some paeds; neuro; rheum)  
MSK (lower limb focus)  
MSK (upper limb focus)  
Paediatric – no direct physio led sessions but children can be referred in with a programme to carry out in the pool, this includes OP and special/mainstream children. These are reviewed by the physiotherapy termly.  
Paediatric – small pre-school group directly led by physio. Other children access the pool with school and follow a physiotherapy programme that is reviewed termly.  
Paediatric - 2 sessions provided by physiotherapy for Ysgol Gogarth pupils, 3 sessions provided by physiotherapy for children who do not attend the school. These children are referred into the session by other physiotherapists and follow a 6 week block of treatment.  
Paediatric – no current access to hydrotherapy. School are investigating access to Ysgol Pen Coch in the |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ysgol Pen Coch, Flint East</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Y Canol in Ysgol Heulfan in Wrexham</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ysgol Gogarth</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ysgol Tir Morfa (access Gogarth or Leonard Cheshire)</td>
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<tr>
<td>POWYS THB</td>
<td>2 + 1</td>
<td>Hydrotherapy pools: Ysgol Cedewain, Newtown Ysgol Penmaes, Brecon Also access RJAH pool in Oswestry, Shropshire. Also access patient private pools and leisure centre pools.</td>
<td>The two hydrotherapy pools are accessed in the special schools but have shared policy/procedures in place. The North Powys pool in line with the school itself is imminent for updating. There is access for preschool babies/children and children in mainstream school, as well as 14+ patients that is locally negotiated. The school also accesses the hydrotherapy pool for school programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sept 17 school year. If this goes ahead the children will be assessed by physiotherapy and provided with a programme.