

Clinical Reasoning: Understanding the Person and the Problem: Assessment and Management Implications

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Every day clinicians use clinical reasoning to process clinical data, make physiotherapy diagnoses and management decisions, and evaluate their practice. The goal of reasoning is “Wise Action”, that is, making the best management judgements for each patient.

A distinction can be made between understanding and managing a patient’s physical problem to effect change requiring biomedically driven cause and effect thinking and action, or “diagnostic reasoning” and procedural management, versus, understanding and interacting with the person to effect change requiring biopsychosocially driven “narrative reasoning” and cognitive-experiential management. Current concepts in diagnostic and narrative reasoning will be presented. The importance of physiotherapy psychosocial assessment will be highlighted along with associated neuroscience and learning theory underpinning promoting change in patients’ cognitions, emotions and health behaviours.