

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello Mr./Mrs. [Name],

Thank you for participating in this study. The aim of this research is to explore barriers and facilitators influencing physiotherapists' adherence to clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) and return-to-sport criteria (RTS) following anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction (ACLR).

The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized. All data will be treated confidentially and used exclusively for research purposes.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without consequences.

Do you agree to participate in this interview under these conditions and to the audio recording, transcription, anonymization, and potential publication of the results?

Participant Background

Could you please introduce yourself:

- Age
- Years of experience as a physiotherapist
- Type of employment
- Area of specialization
- Relevant additional training or courses

How many ACLR patients do you approximately treat per week?

Use of CPGs and RTS criteria

- Do you use CPGs for ACLR rehabilitation?
- If yes: Which guidelines do you use, and what informs your decision to use them?

- If no: How do you typically structure your clinical decision-making in ACLR rehabilitation?
- To what extent do you integrate RTS criteria into your clinical practice?
- Which criteria do you commonly use, and why?
- How do you decide which RTS criteria to apply in individual cases?

Clinical Case Vignettes

Case 1 – Low-demand patient

A 55-year-old female sustained an ACL rupture after a traffic accident while walking. She underwent ACLR due to knee instability. She is now one week post-operative.

Her primary goal is to regain pain-free mobility for daily activities such as walking her dog. She does not participate in sports.

Questions:

- How do you approach clinical assessment at this stage of rehabilitation?
- Which physical tests do you consider appropriate, and why?
- Which patient-reported outcome measures would you use?
- How do you guide early rehabilitation and progression?
- What factors influence your decision-making for functional milestones (e.g., walking independently)?

Case 2 – High-demand athlete

A 22-year-old male recreational freeride skier sustained an ACL rupture during skiing. He underwent ACLR and aims to return to sport at pre-injury level.

He has regained full knee range of motion, normal gait, and has completed progressive strength training, including squat performance without pain or valgus collapse. Neuromuscular control during basic dynamic tasks is established.

Questions:

- How do you evaluate readiness for progression at this stage?
- Which clinical tests and functional assessments do you consider essential, and why?
- Which patient-reported outcome measures do you use?
- How do you determine readiness for return to sport?
- What additional physical or psychological factors influence your decision-making?

CPGs Discussion

We will now focus on selected ACLR CPGs, including those from:

- Royal Dutch Society for Physical Therapy¹
- American Physical Therapy Association²
- MOON Knee Group³

These guidelines were identified in a systematic review as high-quality and clinically relevant.⁴

You will be given time to briefly review these guidelines.

Guideline Evaluation

We would like to explore your perception of these guidelines in relation to:

- Structure and layout
- Clarity of content
- Clinical applicability
- Barriers to implementation

- Facilitators for implementation

Closing

Thank you very much for your participation.

If you wish to add anything, you are welcome to do so now.

You will have the opportunity to review the transcript before analysis. You may withdraw your data up to two weeks after the interview.

REFERENCES

1. Van Melick N, van Cingel REH, Brooijmans F, Neeter C, van Tienen T, Hullegie W, et al. Evidence-based clinical practice update: practice guidelines for anterior cruciate ligament rehabilitation. *Br J Sports Med.* 2016;50(24):1506-1515. doi:10.1136/bjsports-2015-095898.
2. Logerstedt DS, Scalzitti DA, Risberg MA, Engebretsen L, Webster KE, Feller J, et al. Knee stability and movement coordination impairments: knee ligament sprain revision 2017. *J Orthop Sports Phys Ther.* 2017;47(11):A1-A47. doi:10.2519/jospt.2017.0303.
3. MOON Knee Group. ACL rehabilitation guidelines. 2023. Available at: <https://acl-tear.info/anterior-cruciate-ligament-rehabilitation/moon-knee-acl-rehabilitation-guidelines-therapists/>. Accessed August 31, 2024.
4. Andrade R, Pereira R, van Cingel R, Staal JB, Espregueira-Mendes J. How should clinicians rehabilitate patients after ACL reconstruction? A systematic review of clinical practice guidelines with a focus on quality appraisal (AGREE II). *Br J Sports Med.* 2020;54(9):512-519. doi:10.1136/bjsports-2018-100310.