

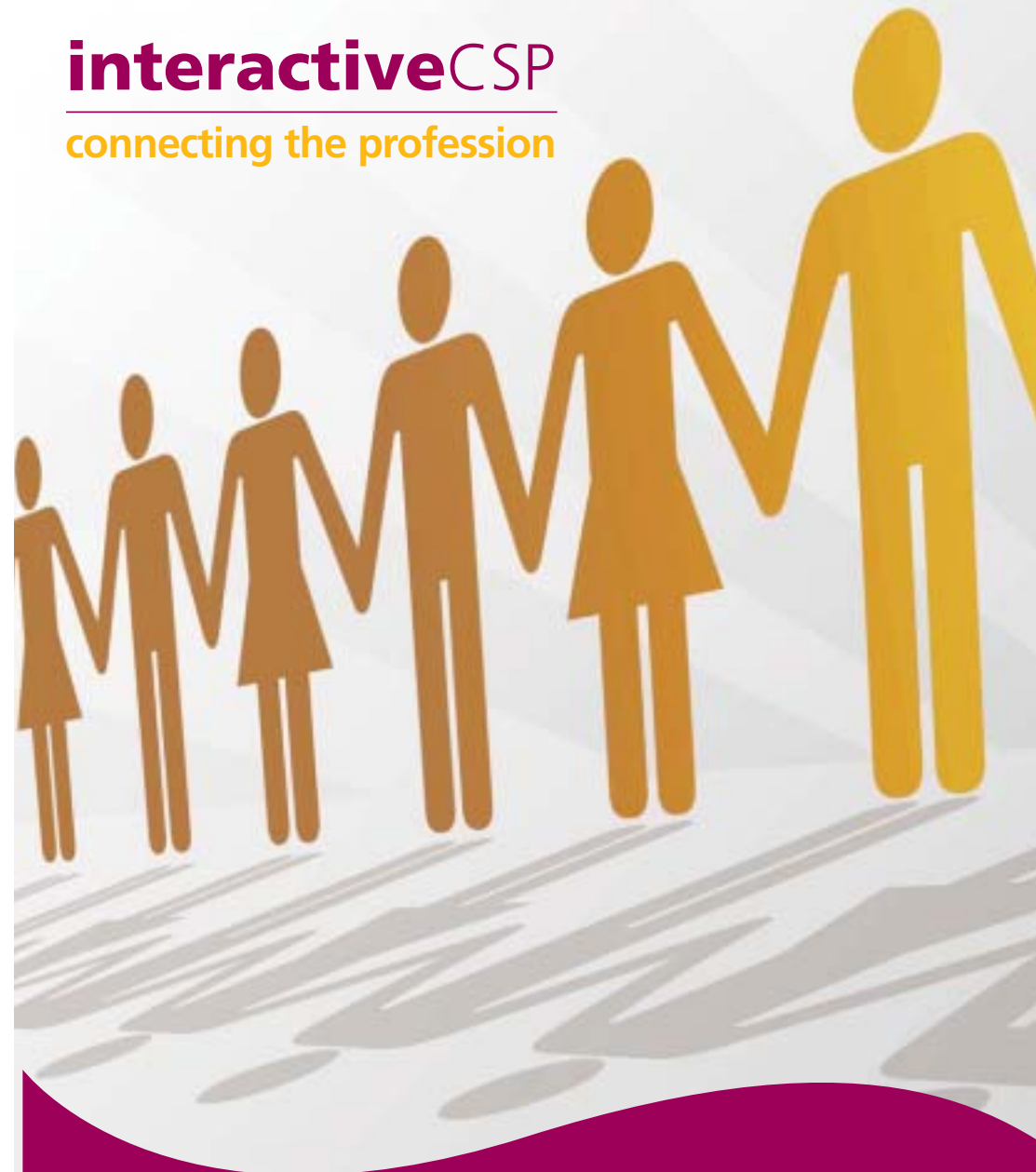


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www.csp.org.uk

interactiveCSP

connecting the profession



Your guide to the peer-led resource that is revolutionising communication across physiotherapy

www.interactivecsp.org.uk



User comments on iCSP pilot site

As a first time user of this service, I was delighted at how quickly I received a response and details of further contacts...

I use it nearly every day... I find it is a brilliant way to keep in touch with national developments, and particularly when new documents or guidelines are published – I am much more likely to access them and read them and do something with them when I can get hold of them straightaway, rather than wait several months for a dog-eared copy to make its way on to my desk.

As a lecturer in higher education... I can sing the praises of iCSP, various sites as avenues that help keep me (and hence my teaching!) up to date on what's happening in the clinical field. Thanks.

As a higher education employee it has enabled me to keep up to date with all issues of physiotherapy practice. It has become part of my regular work routine to check out appropriate networks, find out what's happening, and take part in discussions. The document section is particularly useful, and time saving!

As I work out in the community in a joint health and social services team it is a good way of keeping up to date with new ideas and initiatives without having to plough through lots of non-relevant information.

One of the best ideas from CSP in a long time... As a lecturer it is one way to keep me in touch with relevant clinical questions and problems clinicians are facing.

I was asked to write criteria for prescribing hip protectors... and there it was, easy to find by just typing "hip protectors" in the search section.

I am an avid fan of iCSP as it has alerted me to active and interested colleagues in and around the UK that I may not have known about or were not in touch with.

I think it's fantastic. A few examples of how it's helped me include: dissemination of project plans around development of guidelines for physiotherapy... Another time was when I needed a patient directed guidance form for oxygen and found it on the docs section.

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Contacting the iCSP team

Registration enquiries **020 7306 6666**

User account enquiries **020 7306 6666**

System errors/problems **020 7314 7870**

Content related enquiries **020 7314 7870**

What is interactiveCSP?

InteractiveCSP is a new approach to sharing knowledge, based on connecting peers who have a clinical or other interest in common. The initiative is based around an easy to use website called interactiveCSP or iCSP. The site has just been launched across the UK and this supplement provides you with a comprehensive guide to what it offers, how to use it and why it has been developed.

InteractiveCSP enables people to keep up to date, to interact with their peers and to share knowledge and resources. It works across sectors and locations and covers a range of different interests and issues. It puts the individual in control because they only associate themselves to the issues that interest them and they can change these at any time.

InteractiveCSP has the potential to transform communications and knowledge sharing across the profession. Importantly, it has already gone some way to realising this potential because it is launched on the back of a three-year pilot exercise. Over 7,000 members of the profession were using the iCSP pilot site and feedback to date has been very positive.

The site was developed to meet the communications and networking needs of the physiotherapy profession following extensive consultation with CSP members in the Northern and Yorkshire region. From the outset, the purpose and focus of the initiative

Key features of iCSP

- free, easy and effective
- fully searchable
- users contribute content
- password protected
- content is personal to your interests
- email bulletins highlight new content
- users can change interests at any time
- single account for iCSP and CSP website.

InteractiveCSP is about

- physiotherapy and people not technology
- connecting people around shared interests
- networking irrespective of location or situation
- doing your job more easily and more effectively
- managing change – helping the profession respond and influence change
- peer support on a 'give and take' basis
- sharing knowledge and know-how
- practical resources being made available to the profession
- timely and targeted information and support
- a partnership between CSP, the CI/OG community, CSP boards and CSP members
- surviving and thriving in a rapidly changing world.

has been to support people in their day-to-day roles.

InteractiveCSP is all about physiotherapy not technology. It is an initiative that has been led by the profession and developed in partnership with CSP boards, clinical interest and occupational groups (CI/OGs) and individual members. Over 30 interest groups are running clinical or occupational networks on the website and the CSP boards are running the CSP regional areas of the site. In total around 200 members of the profession will be helping to manage content on the site.

This supplement demonstrates why and how iCSP is relevant to you and your needs. It sets out the benefits of using the site and provides clear and easy to follow guidance on how to register and use the site. [FL](#)

NIGEL SENIOR
iCSP project manager



What can iCSP do for you?

InteractiveCSP will enable you to:

- **access a wide range of physiotherapy networks** – each is based around a specific issue, interest, specialty or work-related role. The networks bring together the community of people interested in that issue and enable them to interact and share their knowledge and experience. Each network is hosted either by members of the relevant clinical interest or occupational group or by CSP staff.
- **build your knowledge and confidence** – every day your peers are having discussions, informing each other of new resources, new research and much more. By tuning in to this you can learn from the collective knowledge and experience of your peers. Then, when you are ready, you will hopefully feel able to share your knowledge and experience to help other peers to learn from you.
- **keep up to date** – iCSP gives you lots of ways to keep in touch with what is going on and to focus in on the things that really matter to you. Even if you can't go on to the site, you will be sent updates of new content so you can keep up to date when time is at a premium.
- **tap into the know-how of your peers** – iCSP enables users to draw upon each other's know-how by using discussion forums in each of the networks. Everyone has, at some time, used the staff room or phoned a colleague to get a steer on a clinical question. With iCSP, you can put that question to several hundred of your clinical peers from across the UK, safe in the knowledge that there is no public access to the system.
- **access a wealth of practical knowledge and resources** – the site is packed with news, documents, useful websites, information about events and projects, and lots more. It is also searchable and there are plenty of ways to help you find what you want quickly and easily – even as a novice internet user.
- **demonstrate your continuing professional development (CPD)** – iCSP has a facility to help you to keep track of all your contributions to the site. This can be used either for your own records, as a reminder, or as evidence of your participation in CPD activities.
- **create a package of support that fits your needs** – iCSP puts you in control. You only join networks that interest you and only see content that is relevant to you. You can change your networks or your personal details at any time and can track discussions, get a summary of your new content, cancel network bulletins and much more. All designed to give you what you want and need when you want and need it.
- **avoid reinventing the wheel** – how often have you had to create a document suspecting someone else must have done it before but not knowing how to access examples or learn from the experience of others? With iCSP we hope this will progressively become a thing of the past. If a search doesn't generate results then you can start a discussion – which hopefully will! [FL](#)

How iCSP works

InteractiveCSP enables users to discuss problems, pick each others' brains, inform each other of new developments and share common documents such as patient leaflets, clinical protocols and much more. This is all done by easy to complete online forms that require only basic information technology (IT) skills to use. Once content is added to the site other users can then view it. The site has a powerful search engine and various other features to help the user to retrieve content, for example, email bulletins with links to new items of content.

The website is split into three content areas:

- **Profession-wide** – content for the profession.
- **CSP regions** – content of interest and relevance to a user's own region.
- **Special interest networks** – content related to a specific issue or interest. Users join the networks.

To access the site you must first register. At this point you select the networks relating to your interests and you associate yourself to a health authority or board, which then determines the CSP region you are allocated to. The

site is password protected and there is no public access.

The aim of the site is to enable peer support and peer-to-peer networking. This means users have a responsibility to each other to share their knowledge and resources when they reasonably can. In return they benefit from access to all the knowledge and resources shared across the networks they are associated with. This is a fundamental premise. The success or otherwise of the initiative will depend upon the user community being willing to participate and to share. In effect it works by users giving a little to gain a lot.

Contributing is not a pre-condition of using iCSP. Confidence levels around IT or physiotherapy knowledge may initially prevent this. The system is intended for everyone and is an ideal way to build your knowledge and confidence. We simply ask you to remember that it relies on a 'give and take' premise and so when you are able to participate please do so.

Finally, guidance is available on the site and support is available from the Society's iCSP team whenever needed. [FL](#)

Examples of how iCSP is used:

- **Posing clinical questions to peers who share your speciality** – this is probably the single most common and valued application of iCSP. There are already thousands of examples of people helping and supporting each other.
- **Sharing common documents** – clinical protocols, satisfaction surveys, audit forms, leaflets and more. Most services need versions of these and pooling examples is a great way to avoid reinventing the wheel and learn from each other to improve your documents.
- **Running consultations on policy or practice developments** – when the CSP or a clinical interest or occupational group (CI/OG) has to respond at short notice to consultation exercises iCSP enables us to pull together evidence, views and examples directly from members of the profession very quickly. Our input is therefore greatly improved and strengthened with the voice and experience of frontline staff.
- **Sharing experiences around service reviews or redesigns** – naturally you want to draw upon the experiences of colleagues who have been through similar processes. The site provides you with a great way of putting out a call to your peers across the country either with specific questions or a request for people to get in touch.
- **Sharing new resources with a targeted audience** – when CSP or a CI/OG produce new resources for their constituency they now have the means of bringing it to people's attention as soon as it becomes available. If it is particularly important or time sensitive then it can be emailed out, if not a notification and/or the document can be added to the site.
- **Briefing the right people at the right time** – when news breaks, a crisis hits or an opportunity opens up it is good to know about it and to be in a position to respond as quickly as you need to. Finding out about things too late or via the grapevine can be frustrating and disempowering. With iCSP, immediate notification and guidance can be issued in response to emerging issues.

How to use iCSP

The iCSP site is intuitive and easy to use and there are many improvements from the existing pilot version of the site.

This section is intended to guide you around the site during your first few visits and to act as a reminder afterwards. We hope you will like the site and find it straightforward to use and that it will quickly become a valued resource to you. Please give it a go. The website address is www.interactivecsp.org.uk All the guidance you should need is included below, but call the iCSP team if you need help at any time. Contact details for the team are on page 3.

The login page



To register – click on 'register' and complete the form. You need your CSP membership number and your work and/or home email address. If you are already registered to the main CSP website you use the same details. It should take five to eight minutes to complete the registration process.

To login – when you have completed the registration, type in your username and password and click on 'submit'.

Getting started

InteractiveCSP is only available to members of the profession and invited guests. There is no public access to the site. This means you are only interacting and sharing knowledge with your clinical peers or with CSP staff.

To gain access you have to register and create a username and password. This can then be used to access both iCSP and the CSP's main corporate website.

Forgotten login – if at any time you forget your login details use this feature to get a reminder emailed to you.

Having problems – this will provide you with guidance if you get stuck when trying to login.

The terms of service – the first time you login you will be asked to agree to the terms of service. These set out the basis on which iCSP is provided to you.

Moving around iCSP

Our strong advice is to set aside a little time to have a play in your early visits to the site and to try out as many different things as you can. This will enable you to build your confidence and familiarise yourself with how it works and how to move around. It will not take long to grasp the basic structure, concepts and services.

Tabs – clicking on a tab enables you to move between the four different areas of the site. The maroon coloured tab is the currently active area. The areas of the site are:

- 1 Home – provides access to content of interest to the profession in general and therefore available to all users of iCSP.
- 2 Choose your network – provides access to content relating to your specific interests. The tab is a drop-down list of all the networks that you have joined. To enter a network click on the name and then click 'go'.
- 3 Your CSP region – provides access to content relating to your own region.
- 4 Your account – enables you to manage your iCSP account.

Content menus – enable you to access the different types of content available in that area of the site.

- 5 Header – the maroon coloured box simply restates which part of the site you are currently viewing, for example, paediatrics or Eastern region
- 6 Menu options – enable you to access the different types of content available, for example, documents or events. Simply click on the option you want and a list of titles of that content will be displayed for you to scan and open. See image overleaf.

Top row – provides a range of useful information and features, including a glossary and site map.

The site homepage



Homepage content – the first screen at the site level and for each network and each region is called the homepage. Each provides quick access to the new and important content for that particular network or region. Items of content can be opened by clicking on the title.

User related menus – enable you to access support and to manage your iCSP account. They are always available irrespective of where you are in the site.

- 7 Help and guidance – opens a user guide and enables you to get help via email.
- 8 Manage your account – enables you to change your personal details, networks and other settings. See page 13 'Managing your account on iCSP'.
- 9 View your contributions – enables you to view all the content you have contributed to iCSP. It can be used as evidence of your CPD activities.

Finding content

One of the most important benchmarks of any website is how easy it is to access and/or retrieve the content you need when you need it. The iCSP site incorporates a number of powerful new tools to help with this, as we explain below

Filtering content – in addition to searching for specific items, there are filters throughout the site enabling you to find the content you need. These include:

- Content categories – a drop-down list of the main themes of each network to enable you to only display content related to a specific issue or theme.
- A-Z filters – to enable you to find content based on the first letter of the title.
- Vicinity filters – found in the 'Events' section, to enable you to look for events that are taking place in your vicinity.

Lists of items of content – the first thing you see after you have clicked on a content menu – such as 'News' is a list of the most recent items of that content type. It might include the following:

- 'Network-wide' and 'Region-specific' breakdowns – these only apply to networks that have a regional structure. It means you can see new content relevant to all network users and new content relevant to your region.
- Links to view more content – at the bottom of each list there may be a link to view more items.

Searching iCSP – using the keyword search is the easiest way to find content. It can be used in several ways:

- Home search – if you do a search from the 'home' area of the site it will search all non-private networks on the site, even those you are not registered to.
- Network and region searches – if you initiate your search when you are in a network or region it will only search that part of the site.
- Advanced search – this allows you to set additional parameters to further refine your search.



Viewing items of content

– to open any item of content simply click on the title. Below are a few pointers to help you to move between items of content:

- Documents and useful websites – these will open in a new window to enable you to view the document or site and then easily return to iCSP. To close an open window, simply click on the 'X' in the upper right corner.
- Going back to the list of items – after viewing an item either use the 'back' arrow in your internet browser or use the 'back to list' link or click on the Content menu title on the left hand side.

Key features: getting the most out of iCSP

10 powerful features on iCSP

- 1 Your latest content** – a list of all new content related to your interests.
- 2 Monitor discussions** – new replies are emailed to you.
- 3 Email a discussion** – to all network users if an urgent response needed.
- 4 View your contributions** – a list of all your contributions to iCSP.
- 5 Search** – includes quick and advanced options.
- 6 Users add content** – anyone can add content to a network. It is easy to do.
- 7 Content categories** – filter content based on key issues and themes.
- 8 Highlights** – brings important items of content to your attention.
- 9 Change email subscriptions** – allows you to remove yourself from email updates.
- 10 Regional content** – automatically filtered so you see content relevant to your region.

Using iCSP to keep up to date

Tools to help you to keep up to date include:

- **Email bulletins** – you will receive regular emails listing the new content added to each network you have joined, plus one for your CSP region. These can, however, be deactivated for networks in which you have only a passive or peripheral interest.
- **Monitoring discussions** – you can track any discussions you are particularly interested in. All new replies will then be emailed to you.
- **Your latest content** – this is displayed on the first screen you see when you login. It lists, in date order, all the new content added to the networks you are registered with. This enables you, at a glance, to keep up with what is new in your interest areas.
- **Latest network content** – each network also lists on its first screen the latest content that has been added to that network.

The discussion & exchange module

The discussion and exchange module enables users to learn from each other. It was the most widely used feature on iCSP's pilot site and we had a lot of feedback and ideas for how it could be improved. We have taken many of these ideas on board and introduced a range of new features. These include:

- **email a discussion** – users can email their discussion out to users if an urgent response is needed.
- **monitor a discussion** – users can track discussions and get new replies emailed to them.
- **re-order discussions** – users can re-order a list of discussions by title, author, date posted, number of replies, date of last reply.
- **re-order replies** – users can re-order the replies to a discussion by newest first or oldest first.

10 tips to get the most out of iCSP

- 1 Manage your account** – change your settings to reflect your needs and interests.
- 2 Scan the homepages** – they summarise what is new and important: perfect when you only have a short time.
- 3 Use the email bulletins** – they list all the new content so if time is short you scan these and only open items that sound of interest or relevance.
- 4 Give and take** – if you don't share why should anyone else. If you do, it will encourage others to do the same.
- 5 Be courteous, concise and supportive** – in all your contributions. This will get the best from peers and coax others to participate.
- 6 Exercise your clinical and professional judgement** – iCSP is intended to help and never to replace your critical faculties and judgement.
- 7 Comply with the terms of service** – these include respecting other users, not advertising, complying with copyright and respecting data protection.
- 8 Keep your password private** – you have a personal relationship with iCSP based on a private login. Content added in your name is your responsibility.
- 9 Use the search** – before creating a discussion or requesting the help of peers, search to see if the answer is already on the site!
- 10 Logout when you exit** – this means nobody else can use or misuse your account without your knowledge.

Contributing content

InteractiveCSP is designed to enable peers to share their knowledge with each other. Users can therefore contribute content to any of the networks they have joined. This is easy to do and is absolutely essential to the success of the initiative. It involves:

- **Clicking on the link to 'Add content'** – located in the upper right area of the list view (see the network-wide news listing on page 11).
- **Completing a content form** – either type

or copy and paste text into the form and if appropriate add links to related documents or websites. It takes only a few minutes to add an item of content once familiar with how to do it.

- **Approving content** – all content, other than discussions, will only appear on the live website after being approved by a network moderator. Moderators check the content and set various parameters ensuring content is displayed and categorised correctly. Editing is kept to a minimum.

Managing your account on iCSP

A key principle of iCSP is the user remains in control at all times and can change all aspects of their relationship with the system whenever they choose to do so. This is quick and easy to do using the following:

- **Change your personal details** – enables you to update your personal details, including

password, professional profile, email address and the region you are associated to.

- **Change your networks** – enables you to add or remove yourself from networks.
- **Change your email subscriptions** – enables you to remove yourself from the email bulletins.
- **Change your monitored discussions** – enables you to remove yourself from discussions you are monitoring.

More than just a good use of technology

If you would like to know more about the background to iCSP, read on...

Four years ago CSP Council commissioned an in-depth review of the issues, needs and constraints facing the profession around communications and networking. The review was partly a response to long-standing problems facing some existing structures and approaches and partly to prepare for future changes and challenges, in particular those posed by the health modernisation reforms.

The review included extensive consultation with members of the profession, with CSP staff and with existing groups and networks. It

covered issues, needs and constraints, current provision and new developments and challenges. The aim was to put the needs of the profession at the centre of any efforts to improve communications and networking. Unsurprisingly, no easy or obvious solutions emerged. However, the need to improve communications was consistently and strongly reflected throughout the review findings and so the Society agreed to develop and then pilot a set of proposals to try and meet the challenges the review had posed.

A technology-based approach was put at the centre of these proposals because it was felt to be the only viable and sustainable option. The system itself was purpose built to address the findings from the review. InteractiveCSP is therefore easy and quick to use, managed by physiotherapists, tailored to each user's personal interests and much more.

The technology adopted also has the advantage that it can be made available to CSP boards and clinical interest and occupational groups. This has enabled the initiative to go forwards in partnership with these groups. One result is members of the profession manage many of the networks and all of the regions on iCSP (see article on page 15). This strongly reinforces the legitimacy of the site and ensures physiotherapy is kept centre stage.

Finally, the review highlighted information and communication technology would become ever more central to the work of all health professionals (see article on page 17). CSP therefore took a calculated risk that by embracing technology in the way it has with iCSP, ahead of most other professions, it would help to place physiotherapy in a strong position as technology becomes more central in the workplace. [FL](#)

Key findings from the evaluation of the pilot site

- 93 per cent thought iCSP either good or excellent.
- 73 per cent thought iCSP was either a good or excellent use of their time.
- Over 90 per cent rated the services either useful or very useful.
- 69 per cent indicated iCSP had added either significant or very significant value to their CSP membership.
- 68 per cent very strongly supported rollout nationally and a further 26 per cent strongly supported rollout.

For physios, by physios

Physios across the countries are the real architects of iCSP, says **Denise Roberts**

'The paediatric community feels they are more in touch with the CSP since iCSP came on board,' says Mary Harrison, northeast representative for the Association of Paediatric Chartered Physiotherapists. She comments: 'Before you felt there was that distance between you and your governing body. It's the best thing the CSP has done in years and years, and I have been qualified a very long time.'

Mary is just one of the physiotherapists helping shape iCSP. She joined an iCSP steering group three years ago when the concept was still at an embryonic stage. 'My initial reaction to iCSP was: this is the way forward in the 21st century,' she says. 'During the steering meetings we looked at the direction we thought we should take, and when the pilot scheme launched [in the Northern and Yorkshire region] I became the moderator for the paediatric network. Because I was reporting back to the professional community they started using it, and suddenly the network took off.'

Crucially, interactiveCSP is the product of many minds and hearts, including plenty of physiotherapists. It is fair to say that it is created for physios, and by physios. Board members, clinical interest group members and many other therapists have been at the helm of its development: pooling knowledge, information, experience and vision. It is because of this that iCSP is an electronic replica of the physio profession in all its diversity.

Amanda Hancock is the moderator for the British Association of Chartered Physios in Amputee Rehabilitation (BACPAR), a role she has enjoyed since iCSP was first piloted. Commenting

on the physio community's response to the BACPAR network, she says: 'Everyone was enthusiastic about it. They began posting documents and information; they discussed practice and things that had an impact on us as clinicians. [The network] gives us immediate contact with lots of people with skills and experience to share. It is a very good tool for knowing what is happening – funding for research, bibliographies, how practice is changing, different pressures on practice; we've had lively discussions on the site.'

A radical impact

A clear picture is emerging: iCSP is already having a radical impact on practice – both in terms of professional development and in meeting the needs of patients. A vast pool of knowledge has opened up and it will soon be difficult to imagine what practice was like before it.

'Where I have seen the real value in iCSP is where members share information,' says Grahame Pope, chair of the Trent board and the Allied Health Professions Federation. 'That potential to access a large number of similar interest individuals and to get answers is a real strength of the system.'

Grahame's role has been to support the democratic structures and make sure the CSP's Council and management were able to put in the resources to allow this to happen. He commends the role played by the CSP's development team but also emphasises members' input is central to their ownership of the networks.

'At the inception for iCSP we had a clear idea of what we wanted it to achieve, but from that it has grown enormously – in functionality, in opportunity – doing more than we initially envisaged it would do,' he says. 'It still provides for a need for communication and exchange of information,' he adds. '[Physios] have taken this on board in the pilot site, and... the influence of that input has

come through.'

Managers' network moderator Judith Whittam says she became involved in iCSP because she is a great believer in sharing ideas and not reinventing the wheel. She observes: 'It is great to seek advice from peers, and although it does not take away other advantages to our members in terms of what we can offer, it does mean we are able to support more people in management roles. We have to accept that modern technology is moving services on and we have to maximise the benefit from it.'

Judith adds: 'iCSP certainly helps if people are going through change and are looking for strategies for development; it gives an opportunity to say, "I did it" so you don't have to repeat that work.' And because the profession has a number of specialties, and physios often work in a multidisciplinary environment, the network is a good tool for meeting this need for a range of information, says Mary Harrison.

She notes: 'That's where you can be stumped –

you can be narrow in your field. Now you can get a much wider spectrum of knowledge and, especially if you come across something you've never treated before; you can put something on the network and know you will get help. Also, you don't feel so isolated with iCSP. When I need information I used to go to Google [an internet search engine], now I go to iCSP.'

As iCSP is rolled out nationally, those who have already had input are looking forward to playing a continuing role. Some have specific plans in the pipeline. BACPAR now has a network just for its executive committee, which Amanda Hancock says has completely 'changed how we run our business'. Grahame Pope notes there are plans to build networks for boards to 'facilitate communication with members and make it easier for when we have our meetings'.

Judith Whittam adds: 'What it really does is bring 'real time' help for people. You can say, "I am struggling with this, can someone help me" and get a quick reply saying, "Here I am".' FL

Becoming a moderator

Having basic computer skills needn't prevent you from becoming a network moderator as comprehensive training is provided by the CSP – indeed the only requirement is membership of the specific clinical interest group or board. Seasoned moderators tell us more.

Julia Mackenzie is moderator for the neurology network. She says: 'During training we worked out the basics of getting around the site together, how to put information on, what went where; sometimes half of the trouble is getting a handle on jargon but once you understand that and once you have a picture of the layout it makes things much easier.'

'I was still learning how to use a keyboard, asking "How do you log on?" I had all the challenges for someone who isn't familiar with computer systems – that something might go out in draft, I might break something, or push something I shouldn't, but none of that happened. And if you do make a mistake, the CSP's support team are so good at putting it right.'

Mary Harrison, moderator for the paediatric network, adds: 'I felt daunted before it started as I just had very, very basic computer skills. But the training was excellent and I knew there was always someone at the end of the telephone if I needed help, so I was not left to get on alone. Anyone could become one as you don't have to have a huge amount of computer skills, and you will have training. It's been a huge learning curve for me.'

The bigger picture

Making health services more patient-centred and supporting frontline staff is driving many of the changes in information and communications technology in the NHS. **Jane Hobden** assesses how iCSP fits within this scenario

Imagine it's 2010. By this time, the government says, the NHS will be a more streamlined, open organisation with patients having far greater access to information, able to view their healthcare records via the internet. What's more healthcare professionals will be able to access and share information, enabling them to analyse NHS use or produce risk predictions systems for primary care trusts. The result? Delivering services more effectively than ever before as they are designed to meet the clients' needs.



Move with the times: tablet PCs enable therapists to add clinical info to electronic records wherever they are

The big question is whether this vision can become reality. The government is certainly putting money where its mouth is in terms of providing a robust information technology (IT) infrastructure. In what it says is one of the world's biggest ever civil investments in information and communications technology (ICT) and the biggest in the NHS, the government has invested £2.3 billion over the last three years, and awarded contracts for local service providers worth £6.2 billion over the next seven years. This money will fund a whole raft of changes in England being developed by the National Programme for IT (NPIfIT). These include the care records service, the choose and book system and the electronic transmission of prescriptions (see box on page 18).

All these changes will profoundly affect the way physiotherapists and other health professionals work, says CSP project manager Nigel Senior, the architect behind iCSP. Nigel sees the system as playing a key role in helping physios to manage the broader ICT changes coming on-stream – not least in building their confidence in using information technology. 'Using iCSP will instill

a 'can-do' attitude towards IT, and will show how IT can bring real benefits to them,' he says.

In this time of rapid change, Nigel sees iCSP as an opportunity physios should seize as a means of making their work easier. The system is designed to be easy to use, enabling physios to access targeted information quickly, to share their knowledge and to offer each other support. 'For instance', he explains, 'if a paediatric physio is working with a child who has a condition of which they have little experience, at the press of a button, they can contact 1,000 other paediatric physios and

tap into their expertise.'

iCSP will also enable physiotherapists to share experiences about how the new NHS systems are being implemented, and to get help on specific difficulties, for example, on adapting systems to a specific way of working. Useful support resources such as training or guidance notes can also be shared.

The sort of world physios will inhabit in 2010 is one where access to information regarding best practice or innovative practice will be essential. Pen Robinson, former CSP director of member networks and relations has been involved in advising the NHS on the IT needs of allied health professionals (AHPs) for a decade. She believes the new technology means physiotherapists can swiftly access key information and the latest evidence they now need for their work, for instance, researching the Cochrane library via the National Electronic Library for Health. And while the array of new ICT systems can seem daunting, support should be in place, with training being provided by all NHS employers.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is

A national electronic information spine

NHS care records service: every patient will have a central electronic record, giving authorised health professionals and patients secure, easy access to medical and care records. The record will identify essential details and any care and treatment clients have received, plus patient contact with all care providers. Gradually being rolled out over the next few years, the system becomes fully operational in 2010.

Choose and book: this system allows patients who need referring to a consultant or other practitioner, to choose the time, date and place of their first hospital or clinic outpatient appointment. They will be able to book the appointment on the spot, while they are with the GP, or later, either online or through a telephone booking system. The system is currently being introduced.

Electronic transmission of prescriptions (ETP): prescriptions issued by GPs and other prescribers will be transferred electronically to the pharmacist chosen by the patient. The intention is to make the service more convenient for patients, and pharmacists, armed with more information, will be able to offer more tailored advice. Better knowledge of patient's medication histories will also mean improved patient care.

Picture archiving and communications systems (PACS):

PACS can store, distribute and display digital images such as electronic x-rays and scans. Images can be immediately distributed across several NHS locations. Forming a key part of every patient's care record, the images will also be stored centrally. Benefits for patients include more effective care with clinicians and care teams working together across locations, and faster access to medical imaging services and results.

N3 – the national network: this is a new high-speed broadband network replacing the private NHS communications network NHSnet. Underpinning the other reforms, the result is faster, more efficient services for patients with online access to records, and visual images when needed. Specialist care will also be more widely available through remote diagnosis without patients having to travel miles to specialist centres.

Contact: a centrally managed email and directory service provided free to NHS organisations in England.

Quality Management and Analysis System (QMAS): an IT system giving GP practices and primary care trusts objective feedback on the quality of care they deliver.

Further info: www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk

also an area where iCSP can play a vital role. As well as accessing details of newly published research and good practice, iCSP enables users to contribute content and interact with peers, for example, sharing research findings or starting or responding to a discussion. A user can then use contributions of this sort as evidence of CPD. As Nigel Senior explains: 'The system enables users to view all the contributions they have made to the different networks and sections of iCSP.'

Access to a computer remains a big issue – and one on which the success of the changes is dependent, says Pen. Currently the situation is mixed, and though improving, some staff still have only minimal access to a computer. The NHS should also be investing in palm top computers, allowing community based health professionals to input data while working.

Margaret Hastings, AHP information development officer for Scotland, echoes her concerns. She is acutely aware of the need to ensure technology fits the needs of physios. She notes 'tablet' personal computers, with

drawing and annotating abilities, would equip physios to draw charts and carry out other tasks while away from the office. However, she adds changes must be backed up with quality training to build confidence and skills in using technology.

Margaret has been involved with the Kerr report, about the future direction of healthcare in Scotland, and the use of ICT to help manage long-term conditions. The report stresses the importance of a healthcare system that promotes self-management and preventive care, and information being shared between patients and professionals and across different organisations.

In terms of the changes that lie ahead, she believes physios need to embrace working with ICT. Pen concurs: 'Within every trust there should be someone leading on this area. Find out who they are and get involved – it is only by becoming involved physios can get things to work to their advantage.' The same is true for iCSP – it's only by getting involved physios can see how IT can work for them. **FL**

User comments on iCSP pilot site

I'd like to thank everyone who contacted me with information following my query. So many of you responded by email or took the trouble to phone me... I have forwarded the information to the mother concerned who now thinks I'm wonderful. Forgive me if I take the credit! What a fantastic system iCSP is proving to be.

I received six replies within 24 hours... This quick response to my query from so many people with much more experience than myself was invaluable.

I received a number of replies which were very helpful and thought provoking. Prior to that I had not been able to find any relevant info. I only registered in order to ask my question and was very impressed with how easy it was to use...

I'm a senior I working in Orkney... I have appreciated being able to read what are issues for my colleagues whom I would never get a chance to meet.

Sharing of information in this way promotes learning in a useful but informal way.

It's a fantastic resource which puts you in touch with forward thinking, helpful peers. I have used it to solve clinical dilemmas including outcome measures, consent and PGD for injection therapy.

It is proving to be a very valuable tool towards CPD and reducing professional isolation.

As a regional safety rep, iCSP is very useful for contacting my colleagues around the region, and I hope that in the future all communication can be done this way to avoid the huge quantities of mailing that currently need to be done.

From looking at the discussion forums over the last couple of months, it is obvious that we are still asking questions about topics that seem to come up time and time again – I hope that the interactive site will stop us from "reinventing the wheel" so time can be freed up to push our profession forward.

I am now using it on a daily basis. I find the mailshots particularly useful for keeping me up to date on the latest research and development... I believe it to be a great support network for junior physiotherapists.