

Prevalence of Awareness of Physiotherapy Amongst Health Care Professionals in Surat City

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ABSTRACT

Background: Physical therapist plays an important role in health care in reducing hospital stay, rehabilitation for better quality of life and quicker recovery. That is why it is important for the health care professionals to be aware about the importance of a role of physical therapist in maintaining functional ability of an individual and approaches and principles.

Methods: A sample of 151 subjects were randomly taken and every subject was given a validated questionnaire which was taken as an interview. Physiotherapist, interns, Lab technicians, Unwilling participants were excluded. Further analysis was done after the response was gathered.

Result: There is 100% awareness of the existence of the field of physiotherapy among health care professionals in Surat city, but not of individual specialties like burns management, prescribing orthosis and community management.

Conclusion: The study revealed that there is full awareness about physiotherapy among health care professionals in Surat city. Most of the subjects believed that patients should visit a physiotherapy center only on the reference of a doctor. Community based rehabilitation is least known among subjects while neuro and ortho rehabilitation is known popularly.

Keywords: Physiotherapist, awareness, health care professionals, subjects.

INTRODUCTION

Physiotherapist in some continents is also addressed as physical therapist. Prevention, Health promotion, treatment of various diseases for better quality of life and optimal functioning of individuals are the focus of physiotherapy. [1][17] WHO defines that Physical therapy is concerned with identifying and movement potential within the spheres of promotion, maximizing quality of life, treatment/intervention, habilitation and rehabilitation, relieve and prevention. [2][10][13]

Physical therapy dates back to the year 1813 that was when the father of physiotherapy Per Henrik Ling founded the royal Central Institute of gymnastics. This organization carried out massage,

manipulation and exercise [3]. During the same time, Mary McMillan, also known as Mother of Physiotherapy, revolutionized the area of PT by establishing the American Women's Physical Therapeutic Association" currently known as American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). [4]

Indian Association of Physiotherapy (IAP) Gujarat too has followed the same tradition of providing exemplary leaders in the field of Physiotherapy. The IAP Gujarat was previously functional as city branches of Surat, Baroda, Anand, Kutch, Navsari, Rajkot and Ahmedabad for the development of physiotherapy profession in Gujarat. IAP Kutch branch along with the Surat branch worked tirelessly during the Kutch

earthquake disaster in 2001, which shaped the professional integrity in the state and also at the national level. Also, the calamity helped us develop advanced infrastructure for physiotherapy in the state and physiotherapy professionals were known for their work in paraplegics and people with amputees. IAP Gujarat branch was formed in 2019 march. [5]

In 2022, physiotherapy will complete 70 years of patient care in India. In the past 70 years physiotherapy has grown leaps and bounds but is yet to make a lasting impact amongst the masses as a major health care delivery system. The method of practicing physiotherapy as a first contact profession is infrequent though physical therapist work within interdisciplinary rehabilitation programs and independently of other health care settings. [6] Then also patients rely on physicians for recommendations for physiotherapy. Medical referrals serve as also as an indicator of the referring health care professional about the level of awareness of physiotherapy and also as a tool for communication. [7]

Health care professionals in a society have dual responsibilities of upgradation as well as delivery of services. The need of regulatory body can never be overemphasized in creating a framework within which health-care professionals upgrade themselves by acquiring new skills, innovating new approaches and technology, transfer knowledge as well as provide health-care services that are innocuous, effective and patient centered.

“The National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Act” was enacted by the Government of India with the assent of the President of India on March 28,2021, that provides a regulatory body for physiotherapists in India. The aim of this Act is “to provide for regulation and maintenance of standards of education and services by allied and health-care professionals, assessment of institutions, maintenance of a Central Register and State Register and creation of a system to

improve access, research and development and adoption of latest scientific advancement and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto” [8]

This encompasses emotional, social, psychological and physical wellbeing. It includes the interaction between the physical therapist, families, care givers, clients/patients, other health care professionals and communities in a process goals are agreed upon and movement potential is assessed, using unique skills, relieving pain syndromes and knowledge to physical therapists. [2][9][10][14][13][15][12] It is widely used in health institutions, schools, sports, private practices and workplace settings. [10][7]

Physical therapist plays an important role in health care in reducing hospital stay, rehabilitation for better quality of life and quicker recovery. That is why it is important for the health care professionals to be aware about the importance of a role of physical therapist in maintaining functional ability of an individual and approaches and principles [15][11] Health care professions who are lacking knowledge about its importance and physiotherapy interventions leads to decreased referrals. [11] For example, if no reference is given for post TKR (Total Knee Replacement) there will be restricted range of motion in the knee despite of doing surgery.

Therefore, it is important for the health care professional to be aware about physical therapy. Awareness refers to knowledge that something exists, or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience. [12][1] A good awareness of the health care system would develop an enhanced lifestyle and a faster recovery.

There are several studies in different countries of the world about the awareness and knowledge of the roles of physiotherapy among various populations. Studies have been carried out among medical residents, medical interns and general practitioners in India. There is a study conducted by Doshi et al in Mumbai about physiotherapy

Awareness in medical and non-medical population.^[2] There is study about Awareness, Perception and Beliefs about physiotherapy among medical practitioner and medical students: A cross sectional study in Odisha, the authors concluded that there is a more need to take measures to improve awareness of its specialties and of the field. There is a study on Awareness of physiotherapy among general practitioners in a district of Punjab. And a study known as Awareness of physiotherapy among general practitioners: A pilot study carried out in Mumbai. As there are no studies done on awareness of physiotherapy among health care professionals in Surat city. Hence, this study aim is to investigate the level of knowledge and awareness of the roles of physiotherapy among health care professionals in Surat city. The purpose of the study is to find out the percentage of subjects who actually see physiotherapy as a growing profession and also to encourage the subjects to refer their patients for physiotherapy to give their patients a better quality of life and hence to build a better bound and communication between the subjects and the physiotherapist to explore more in the field of science.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **Lydia Wong et.al (2020)**^[1] conducted a study titled, “Awareness and perception of the roles and services of physiotherapy among private healthcare practitioners in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah”. The purpose of this study was to study the current level of awareness and perception of physiotherapy roles and services among health care practitioners in the private sector working at Kota Kinabalu. A total of 120 participants with an age range between 20 to 60 years old who were recruited using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The study concluded that there is moderate awareness regarding the level of awareness and positive perception towards the roles and
2. **Priti Agni et.al (2017)**^[9] conducted a study titled, “Awareness of physiotherapy among general practitioners: A pilot study.” The purpose of the study to know about the interest and acceptance of physiotherapy and also to determine the extent of awareness among general practitioners. A sample size of 150 subjects were randomly chosen. The study was conducted in a questionnaire-based interview format. The study concluded that there is full awareness of physiotherapy among general practitioners.
3. **Dr. Deepa Abichandani et.al (2015)**^[16] conducted a study titled, “Awareness of various aspects of physiotherapy among medical residents.” The purpose of the study was to find the awareness of various aspects of physiotherapy among medical residents and to enquire about their knowledge on various physical therapy modalities and if they have perceived adequate background to refer patients to physical therapy effectively. 180 subjects were given a self- devised pre validated questionnaire. They concluded that there is a need of physiotherapists to educate medical residents about fields of physiotherapy, treatment modalities and evaluative procedures through continuing education programs.
4. **Devanshi Doshi et.al (2017)** ^[2] conducted a study titled, “Physiotherapy awareness in medical and non-medical population: a social media survey.” The purpose of the study was to find level of awareness of physiotherapy among medical professionals and general population. 103 people from medical and 153 people from general population filled the questionnaire. They concluded

that there is a dire need to take measures to improve awareness of the field and its specialties.

5. **Samuel O Bolarinde (2021)** ^[10] conducted a study titled, “Awareness and knowledge about the roles of physiotherapy in healthcare among clinical and non-clinical staff. The purpose of the study was to investigate level of awareness and knowledge about the roles of physiotherapy in healthcare among clinical and non-clinical staff of a tertiary institution in Nigeria. 132 clinical staff and 89 non-clinical staff participated in this study. They concluded that there is inadequate about the roles of physiotherapy in health care among most of the clinical and non-clinical staff.
6. **Chinyemba Zangata et.al (2019)** ^[14] conducted a study titled, “Medical students Awareness of the role of physiotherapy in healthcare at the university of Zambia-Ridgeway campus.” The purpose of the study was to determine the university of Zambia medical students’ awareness of the role of physiotherapy in health care at Ridgeway Campus, school of medicine. 152 medical students of the university of Zambia participated in this study. They conducted that the study revealed that medical students have low levels of awareness regarding the role of the physiotherapists as related to the role of the medical doctors.
7. **Dr. Priyadarshini Mishra et.al (2018)** ^[13] conducted a study titled, “Awareness and perception of physiotherapy intervention among medical practitioner and medical students: a cross sectional study.” The purpose of the study is to conclude about the awareness and perception of physiotherapy interventions in medical practitioners and medical students. A sample size of 500 medical practitioners and students were taken. They concluded that there is a lack of awareness and knowledge among medical students and practitioners about physical therapy.
8. **Anila Paul et.al (2015)** ^[17] conducted a study titled, “Review of physiotherapy awareness across the globe.” The purpose of this study was to explore literature on awareness about physiotherapy across the globe. Studies conducted from 1979 till date was included. They concluded that literature pertaining to awareness of physiotherapy as a crucial partner in health care system is scarce.
9. **Zahoor Ahmad et.al (2021)** ^[11] conducted a study titled, “Awareness of physical therapy among medical doctors in Swabi.” The purpose of the study was to spread awareness of physicians regarding physical therapy which is very important specially in developing countries. 145 participants were taken. They concluded that nearly 60% of the medical doctors in district Swabi were familiar with physiotherapy care and with the field of physiotherapy. A big number of these doctors (80%) were aware that physiotherapy helps in reducing pain, provide appropriate care and plays an important role in the community.
10. **Arakkal Maniyat Shemjaz et.al (2016)** ^[15] conducted a study titled, “Awareness and knowledge of physical therapy among medical interns: a pilot study.” The purpose of the study was to find out the current level of awareness and knowledge about physical therapy among the MBBS medical interns. 50 medical interns participated in this study and carried out purely based on the questionnaire method which consist of sets of questions. They concluded that there is a lack of awareness and knowledge among medical interns about physical therapy. Hence there is a need

of educating the future medical professionals about the physical therapy, thereby reaching a better patient care.

11. **Dr. Amandeep Singh (2017)** [7] conducted a study titled, “Awareness amongst medical professionals about importance of physiotherapy.” The purpose of the study was to evaluate the level of awareness about physiotherapy among medical professionals. 110 medical professionals from Punjab, Haryana and Jammu participated in the survey study. That were required to complete a 21 item self-developed closed- ended questionnaire.
12. **Harikrishnan Ranganathan et.al (2020)** [12] conducted a study titled, “Awareness about physiotherapy among university staffs.” The purpose of the study was to explore the awareness about physiotherapy among university staffs in Malaysia. This study was conducted as a whole population study as all the staffs in one campus of a reputed university in Malaysia was approaches to participate in the study. They concluded that the role of physiotherapy must be enhanced in fields such as pediatrics, women’s health and cardiorespiratory. The perception about the physiotherapy profession needs to be enhanced.
13. **Shree Vardhan et.al (2018)** [6] conducted a study titled, “Awareness of physiotherapy among general practitioners in a district of Punjab.” The purpose of the study is to know how aware the physicians are in terms of need of physiotherapy for their patients. The study concluded that there is lack of awareness regarding need of physiotherapy in Ayurvedic, homeopathic physicians. Allopathic physicians and surgeons are very much aware of the need of physiotherapy in improving the quality of life of the patients.

MATERIALS & METHODS

All subjects were explained the purpose of the study. The informed consent was taken from the subjects prior to the questionnaire. A survey was conducted using a questionnaire that was adopted with permission from a similar study done by Priti Agni.^[9] The questionnaire contain type, course duration, various specialization, interventions, perception of the role of physiotherapy, references etc. type of questions.

The study was conducted in a questionnaire-based interview format in private clinics and tertiary care hospitals in Surat city. Subjects meeting the inclusion criteria were selected for the study.

Total of 151 subjects participated in the study by convenient sampling method. Performa for questionnaire was filled by interviewing the subjects which include information about age, gender, clinical years of practice. Subjects were briefed about the study. A written consent and a validated questionnaire were personally given to fill in the details.

Inclusion criteria –

1. Male and female health care professionals.
2. Age group 20 to 60 years.
3. Doctors holding Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS), Doctor of Medicine (MD), Master of Surgery (MS), Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS), Masters in Dental Surgery (MDS), Bachelor of Homoeopathic Medicine and Surgery (BHMS), Bachelors of Ayurvedic, Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) along with specialists and super specialists were included.
4. Clinical practice above 1year.
5. Subjects’ willingness to participate in the study.

Exclusion criteria-

1. Physiotherapist, interns.
2. Lab technicians, naturopath.
3. Unwilling participants.

Statistical Analysis

To avoid any misinterpretation, the questionnaire was kept self-informed and self-administered. The response was obtained and analyzed by entering in Microsoft Office Excel (version 2011).

RESULT

Percentage and frequency were used as a summary statistic and represented using a graph. About existence of the physiotherapy sector this study revealed that there is 100% prevalence of awareness among health care professionals in Surat city. With regards to the role of physiotherapy in a health sector variable on the ordinal scale showed, equal number of volunteers considered it as very important and important PHD is not very much common among volunteers as the bachelors and master's degree are.

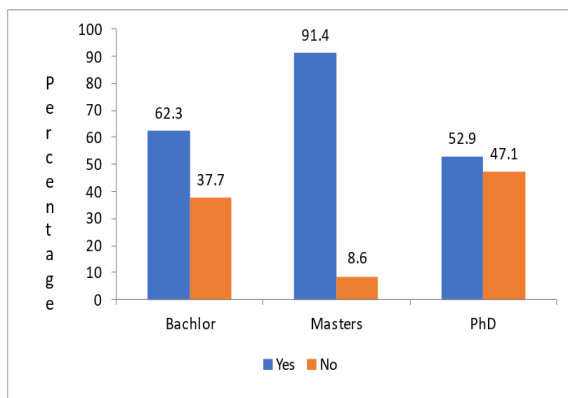


Figure-1 Awareness of course duration

About the role of physiotherapy in health sector equal amount of subject considered it as important and very important.

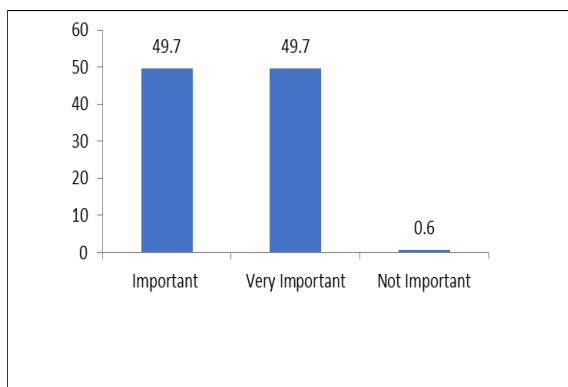


Figure -2 Role of physiotherapy in health sector

Less volunteers thought that patients should only approach a physiotherapist only when they ask to and most volunteers believed that patient can approach a physiotherapist without their reference.

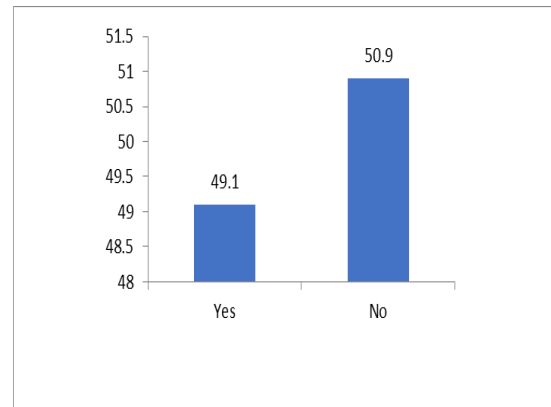


Figure – 3 Should patients visit physiotherapy center on reference?

Most of the volunteers refer their patients for physiotherapy to give better quality of life to their patients while there are volunteers who do not believe in referring their patients to a physiotherapist.

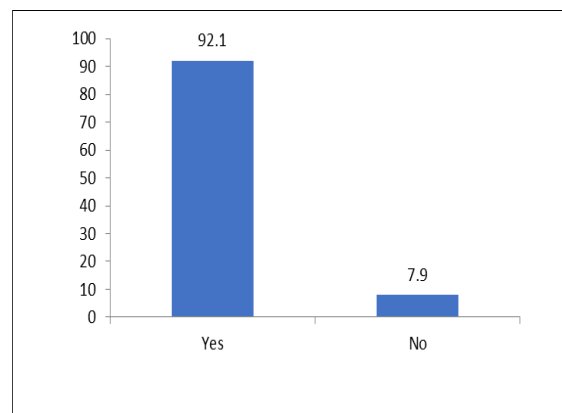


Figure - 4 Are patients referred for physiotherapy by the volunteers?

DISCUSSION

According to the analysis of the obtained data, it was observed that of the total interviewed sample of 151 volunteers, 100% volunteers were aware about physiotherapy, the results of which were similar to the study conducted by Priti Agni (2017) Through the responses obtained, it was noted that 91% learned about the physiotherapy field while doing graduation. Followed by this, information gathered next

was through hospitals and medical centers (34%), mass media (17%), word of mouth (22%) and through colleagues (16%). As the information gathered by mass media is less which makes us realize that there is a need to spread awareness in mass media about physiotherapy via mediums like newspaper, social media, leaflets etc.

When the subjects were asked to comment on their perception on the job of physiotherapist, it was observed that (96%) volunteers feel that pre and postoperative ortho rehabilitation and neuro rehabilitation are the most important job. Most of the subjects are aware that pre physiotherapy is important in the patients who needs surgery as well as post rehabilitation. 92% volunteers agreed that there is major role of physios in sports. 91% volunteers had the perception that physiotherapists perform geriatric rehabilitation. Knowledge of volunteers about management in women's health is 89% as most of the volunteers were aware about physiotherapist treating women during their urinary incontinence or prolapse, antenatal and post-natal rehabilitation. 82% volunteers agreed on physiotherapist treating parents who are in ICU. Only 64 % of volunteers were aware that physiotherapist manage patients with burns though burns is the cause of accidental death. There is less awareness among volunteers of prescribing orthosis and prosthesis by the physiotherapist with only 56%. So, there is a need to make health care professionals aware that physiotherapist do have that skill and knowledge to decide on what kind of orthosis or prosthesis a patient might need. This also display that there is a need to do a study on lack of prescription of prosthesis and orthosis by the physiotherapist.

Health care professional were more aware about the specialization in sports which is done by physiotherapist with 86%, neurosciences 83%, musculoskeletal 82%, cardiorespiratory 71% and community-based rehabilitation with 54%. This shows that health care professionals are less aware about community rehabilitation and more

awareness about different kind of physiotherapy served in CBR among subjects should be spread by taking seminars as well as by arranging leaflets.

Academic knowledge of physiotherapy among health care professionals according to the study is 62% in bachelor's degree, 91% in master's degree and only 52% volunteers knew about the PHD program in physiotherapy. Many volunteers were aware about the bachelor's degree but were unaware about the duration of bachelor's degree where most were aware about the course duration of master's degree. This proves that volunteers are not very known about the doctorate degree. This could be because PHD program is not highly perused by the physiotherapist. Hence the knowledge about PHD program should be made more precise in health care professionals. Additionally, when the volunteers were asked to comment about the interventions used by the physiotherapist 98% agreed that exercise is the basic role of physiotherapist, electrical modalities 96%, heat therapy 96%, mobilization 94%, cryotherapy 92%, pressure points 84%, massage 70% and drugs 48%. 70 % agreed that physiotherapist does massage hence it is most important that there should be more awareness about the specific type of fascia and deep tissue release which is done by the physiotherapist and not the local massage.

Asked about the knowledge of physiotherapy centers in their locality 88% volunteers were aware of their surroundings. Volunteers were asked to talk about how important is the role of physiotherapy in a health sector from which 49% volunteers agreed upon the role to be very important and 49% agreed it to be important. There is a good sign to know that no volunteers agreed that physiotherapy is not important in the health sector. Through the responses obtained about the need for physiotherapy centers in hospitals 93% volunteers agreed upon it while 6% volunteers believed that there is no such need of physiotherapy centers in all hospitals.

When asked about the need for lectures on physiotherapy for medical students 92% volunteers agreed while 7% volunteers did not find it that important about the knowledge of physiotherapy among medical students.

Surprisingly 49% volunteers consider that every patient should only visit the physiotherapy center when a doctor refers to them but there are 50% volunteers who believe that patients can directly consult a physiotherapist for their pain. Pros of the first contact practice is that patient will save his time as well as money by directly getting treatment from a physiotherapist while cons could be that some patient needs medication for the severe illness which puts them in necessity to visit a doctor first.

92% volunteers refer their patients to a physiotherapist for the better quality of life while 7% do not refer their patients at all. 92% volunteers who refer their patients are cases like Orthopaedic (83%), neurological (62%), geriatrics (37%), sports (35%), cardiorespiratory (33%), fitness (32%), women's health (33%) and pediatrics (19%). According to the results there is less referrals in the type of cases which should be made more due to which the bond between the health care professionals and the physiotherapist will increase and could lead to the better benefit to the patient.

Limitation of this study is large about of samples could be collected but due to the constrained time and geographical area it was limited.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that there is full awareness about physiotherapy among health care professionals in Surat city. Most of the volunteers believed that patients should visit a physiotherapy center only on the reference of a doctor. Community based rehabilitation is least known among volunteers while neuro and ortho rehabilitation is known popularly. Prescribing orthosis and prosthesis by a

physiotherapist are not very much popular among volunteers and need to put more focus on these areas by the physiotherapist so that there is more awareness about the field amongst health care professionals as well as for the betterment of the patient.

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