



Awareness of Physiotherapy among Medical Professionals: A Cross Sectional Survey

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Abstract

The study aims to determine the knowledge and awareness of physical therapy among medical professionals. A descriptive, cross-sectional study was used to examine 105 medical practitioners in Haripur. A standardized questionnaire was used to collect data for 3 months, starting in June 2018. Those participants (medical practitioners) that were registered in different Haripur hospitals were included in the sampling, whereas those hospital or clinic participants that were not registered with PMDC (Pakistan Medical and Dental Council) and were not able to complete the questionnaire were excluded from the study. Prior to collecting the data, the individuals provided their written informed consent. According to the type of variable being studied, descriptive statistics were extracted from the response after it had been processed using SPSS-20. The majority of medical professionals (94.3%) showed good knowledge about physiotherapy. The findings indicated that 21% of medical practitioners receive physiotherapy care. According to the results, 84.76% of practitioners referred patients for physiotherapy care. Orthopedic cases were most frequently referred by doctors (554.28%), followed by sports injury cases (10.47%), fitness cases (10.47%), cardiopulmonary cases (5.71%), women's health cases (5.71%), geriatric cases (3.83%), and the least in neurological cases (1.90%) and pediatric cases (1.90%). Physiotherapy was regarded as significant and very important in the health industry by about 40% and 47% of professionals, respectively. More importantly, the majority of professionals, 87%, suggested that every hospital should have a physiotherapy department. Senior medical professionals have extremely positive perceptions of the responsibilities that physical therapists play in patient care and health promotion. Leading medical professionals understood physiotherapy well. Yet, doctors think that the major therapy strategy utilized by therapists is prescription exercises, and there is little knowledge of the most recent developments and inventions in the field of rehabilitation. Orthopaedic treatment and treatment for sports injuries are the most successful physiotherapy treatments, according to practitioners. Despite the fact that medical practitioners are generally aware of physiotherapy and its benefits, there is still a need for progress in this area in order to get better functional results. Hence, proper steps must be taken to raise awareness of and foster a positive attitude towards the profession of physiotherapy.

Keywords Awareness, Medical Professionals, Physiotherapy

1. Introduction

Soft tissue tumors are a highly heterogeneous group of Physical therapy has evolved and progressed from broad forms to specialised kinds of physical therapy services in healthcare settings over the years, just as injuries and illnesses have over the years. Despite the acceptance and advancement of physical therapy on a global scale,

medical doctors do not always understand it. There are numerous branches in the health care industry. In order to provide better healthcare today, interdisciplinary contact between these diverse fields is crucial. Physical therapy has evolved into a vital part of healthcare due to the demands of those who are physically disabled, as well as the effects of war, epidemics, accidents, and growing

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social pressure to integrate individuals with disabilities into society. The opening decades of the 20th century were an exciting moment for physical therapy growth (1). By concentrating on the advancement of its education, physiotherapy can demonstrate its benefits and accomplishments. In order to demonstrate the scope of their job, physiotherapy educators are prepared to meet future consumer and buyer expectations. Despite the fact that there are numerous courses related to each profession, the requirements of the individual professional bodies heavily influenced the development of the physiotherapy curriculum, as they did for all other health care professional courses. One of the accomplishments was the manner in which the chartered society satisfied and loosen its grip by establishing a model curriculum through the transfer of hospital-based physiotherapy (1).

The delivery of health and social welfare services must include physical therapy. Physical therapists work with patients with disabilities and movement impairments to improve their quality of life. They practise independently, like all other healthcare professionals, as well as in interdisciplinary rehabilitation programmes. Physical therapists adhere to their own set of moral standards (2).

According to a study by Acharyan *et al.*, clinical doctors have a sufficient understanding of physiotherapy but require attention when it comes to case referrals and more sophisticated services offered by the physiotherapist (3). Stanton *et al.* came to the conclusion in their investigation that resident physicians lack physiotherapy knowledge (4). Thusharika discovered in their research that there was a need to educate Sri Lanka's general population about physiotherapy (5).

Most health care professionals are still not aware of physiotherapy. There has not been any study done to investigate the physiotherapy awareness service as an essential part of the health care system among the medical professions. So, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the awareness of physiotherapy among medical practitioners in Haripur, KPK, Pakistan. Also, ask them about their understanding of different physical therapy modalities and whether they believe they have the necessary training to appropriately recommend patients to physical therapy.

2. Methodology

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study. Data was

collected from medical practitioners at Mashal Hospital, Yahya Hospital, Noor Surgical Hospital, Mehr General Hospital, Al-Qazi Clinic, Utman Hospital, Doctor's Plaze, Ghazi Hospital, Allama Iqbal Hospital, and DHQ Hospital, Haripur. The trial lasted three months. The convenience sample technique was used to get the data from 105 medical practitioners in total. They were asked to participate in the study once the inclusion and exclusion criteria determined their appropriateness. The subjects' free-written informed consent was obtained. Subjects who were willing to participate in the survey and medical professionals from all of Haripur's hospitals who were registered with the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council were included in the study. Physiotherapists, unwilling subjects, and medical professionals who were not registered with the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council were excluded. At their workplaces, all medical professionals were visited. An initial questionnaire was given to them. There were closed-ended questions on the survey. Questionnaire had three portions, 1st portion contain demographic details which include Questions about Age, gender and Specialties or occupation. Second portion contain questions based on the source of information about physical therapy, the modalities used in physical therapy and conditions treated in physical therapy, and among medical interns.

3. Results

As shown in Table 1, the participants age mean and standard deviation. The minimum age was 26 and the maximum age was 67, while the mean and standard deviation are 38.41 ± 7.119 . Further, 72 (68.5%) were male and 33 (31.42%) were female in this study.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of Age (mean \pm Std. Dev.) and gender frequency

Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Mean \pm Std. Dev	Min	Max
Age	105	38.41 \pm 7.119	26	67
		Frequency	Percent	
Gender	Male	72	68.6	
	Female	33	31.4	
	Total	105	100.0	

Figure 1: The pie chart shows 99 (94.28%) doctors are aware of physiotherapy, while 6 (5.71%) are not aware of physiotherapy. Figure 2, illustrating the pie chart, shows that 22 (20.95%) subjects have taken physiotherapy treatment in their lives, while 83(78.04%)

have not taken any physiotherapy treatment in their life. Figure 3 represents the bar chart, which shows 89 (84.76%) doctors refer their patients for physiotherapy treatment, and 16 (15.23%) doctors did not refer any patients for physiotherapy. Figure 4, presented in a bar chart, shows the most common cases referred to physiotherapy by doctors. Most referred cases by doctors are orthopaedic 57 (54.28%), neurological 8 (7.61%), cardiopulmonary 6 (5.71%), geriatrics 4 (3.83%), fitness 11 (10.47%), paediatrics 2 (1.90%), women’s health 6 (5.71%), and sports injuries with their respective frequencies of 11 (10.47%). Figure 5 shows the doctor’s knowledge about physiotherapy interventions among them. 50 (47.61%) have knowledge about exercises, 9 (8.57%) for massage, 10 (9.52%) have knowledge of electrical modalities used by physiotherapists, 11 (10.47%) are aware of mobilization and manipulation procedures, 9 (8.57%) have knowledge about heating modalities, and 5 (4.76%) know about cold therapy. 2 (1.90%) know that a physiotherapist can prescribe painkillers and muscle relaxants, while 9 (8.57%) know about pressure points.

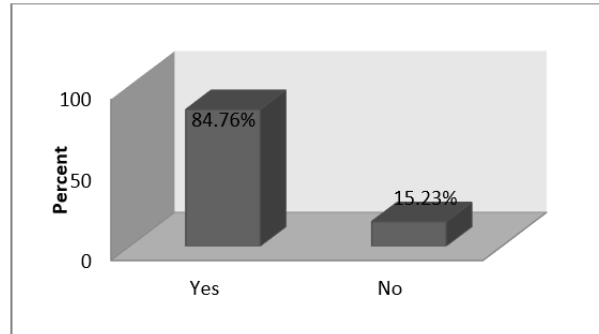


Figure 3: Do doctors refer patients for physiotherapy treatment

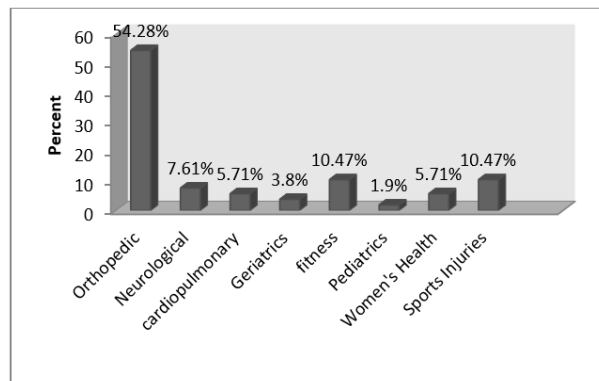


Figure 4: Percentage of cases referred by doctors.

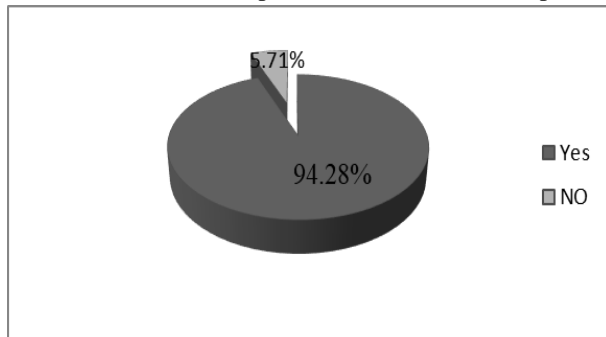


Figure 1: Awareness of physiotherapy by doctors.

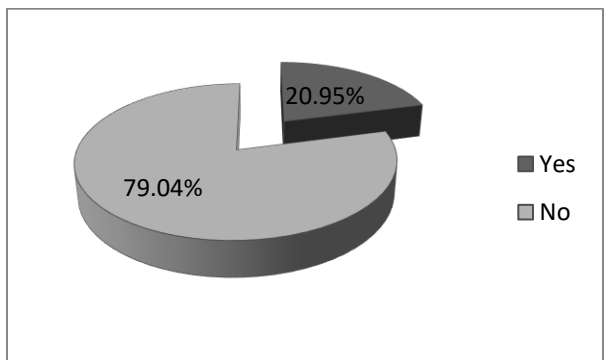


Figure 2: Physiotherapy treatment taken by participants.

4. Discussion

Physical therapy must align with public health initiatives and reflect the health concerns of the twenty-first century. Throughout the healthcare system, physical therapists offer a wide variety of services. The survey aided in understanding how well-known physiotherapy is among medical professionals. The findings showed that 94.3% of doctors were knowledgeable about physiotherapy. Orthopedic physiotherapy was found to have the highest level of awareness for the various fields of physiotherapy at 54.3%, followed by sport injuries and fitness at 10.5%, neurological at 7.6%, cardiorespiratory and women's health at 5.7%, geriatrics at 3.8%, and Pediatrics at 1.9%. Only 21% of professionals receive physiotherapy treatment, while the remaining 79% do not. Exercises ranked first with 47.6% of the total, followed by Mobilization (10.5%), electrical modalities (9.5%), massages (8.6%), hot therapy (4.8%), pressure points (8.6%) and dugs (1.9%). The cause could be a lack of awareness about physiotherapy therapies other than exercises. According to a similar survey-based study

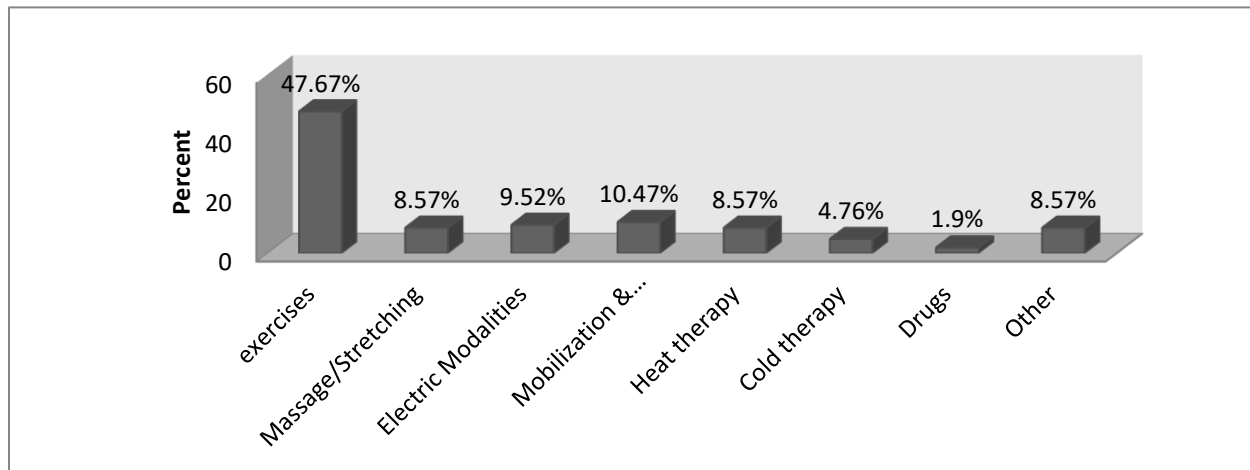


Figure 5: Knowledge about physiotherapy intervention which physiotherapists used in their treatment

conducted in 2013 by Khan *et al.*, 60% of medical practitioners who had mobility dysfunction sought treatment from physical therapists. The survey also revealed that 49% of patients with musculoskeletal, 8% with neuromuscular, and 4% with cardiovascular conditions are typically referred to physiotherapy (2).

In a related study that Ahmad *et al.* did in 2017, 95.5% of the 265 senior medical practitioners who participated were well-versed in physical therapy (6). In a survey-based study conducted by Tuba in 2012, the findings showed that 42% of people were familiar with physiotherapy and that 63% of people regarded physiotherapists as qualified practitioners. 21% of the population received physiotherapy treatments, of which 12.85% had their issues entirely resolved, 10% had them improved, 2.85% had them just a little improved, and 1.42% had none at all (7).

In a 2017 study, Agni and Battin found that general practitioners have an excellent understanding of physiotherapy. Orthopedic disciplines make up 36% of the total, neurological sectors 24%, cardiopulmonary 16%, sports rehabilitation 14%, and community-based rehabilitation 6% (8). Only 9% of higher secondary students are aware of all four modalities, including manual therapy, cold/heat therapy, hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, and exercise therapy, according to a 2017 study by Harikrishnan and Kamalambal. Manual therapy, exercise therapy, and electrotherapy were the three most popular physiotherapy treatments at the time (9).

Jiandani *et al.* carried out a similar study in 2017, and the findings showed that 78% of the general public and 90%

of medical professionals were aware of the discipline of physiotherapy. Both groups were aware of the various physiotherapy specializations. Unfortunately, there is less knowledge in the domains of oncology, plastic surgery, cardiology, pulmonary disorders, and post-operative physiotherapy (10).

This study found that 84.76 percent of practitioners referred cases for physiotherapy treatment. The most common medical conditions for referrals were orthopaedics (54.28 percent), neurological disorders (7.61 percent), cardiopulmonary disorders (5.71 percent), geriatrics (3.83%), fitness (10.47 percent), paediatrics (1.9 percent), women's health (5.7 percent), and sports injuries (10.47 percent). Agni and Batin's study, which also found that 87% of practitioners recommended physiotherapy treatment (11).

5. Conclusion

The study found that general practitioners have a good understanding of physiotherapy. Senior medical professionals have extremely positive perceptions of the responsibilities that physical therapists play in patient care and health promotion. Leading medical professionals understood physiotherapy well. Yet, doctors think that the major therapy strategy utilised by therapists is prescription exercises, and there is little knowledge of the most recent developments and inventions in the field of rehabilitation. The most successful physiotherapy treatments, according to practitioners, are orthopaedic treatment and treatment for sports injuries. The advancements in physiotherapy

for the treatment of pain disorders are less well known to doctors.

6. Recommendation

There's always room for development. To raise awareness, actions must be taken. The advice listed below will help medical professionals and the general public learn more about physiotherapy and its innovations:

- Brief introductory sessions can be held to develop better awareness about the profession, which would be helpful in considering Physiotherapy as a field of study.

Conflict of Interest There is no conflict of interest.

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