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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERCEPTION OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS ON PHYSIOTHERAPY PROFESSION IN DELHI – A SURVEY

Ravinder Kumar Mudgil¹, Radhika Ahuja² and Raveena³

¹MPT (Ortho.), Associate Prof. & Head Department of Physiotherapy, Jagannath University, Haryana, India

²BPT student, Jagannath University, Haryana, India

³MPT Student, Jagannath University, Haryana, India

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*Corresponding author:

Ravinder Kumar Mudgil

ABSTRACT

Background: Physiotherapy is a form of rehabilitation science which helps to make a difference in an individual's ability to live an active and healthy lifestyle. For many physiotherapists working in India, the primary source of reference is a physician. An aware physician can timely refer patients for physiotherapy who can in turn plan an effective management without making the rehabilitation journey taxing. This article will serve us to know about the knowledge and acceptance of physiotherapy and also to determine the extent of awareness and their perception among medical practitioners. **Method & Methodology:** The study sample consisted of 98 subjects who all are from Delhi from which 16 were excluded and 82 were included in a study. A detailed self-administered questionnaire including close ended questions was given to practitioners through online creating Google Form and generating its link, then asked them to fill and submit the form for assess the perception of physiotherapy among the medical Professionals. **Result:** There is significant lack of referral rate to different specialized field of physiotherapy among Delhi's Medical practitioners. Various factors have been identified as a possible reason for low awareness among them as low level of education about Physiotherapy profession, its working criteria, protocols, new advancement in electro modalities, manual therapy and so on. **Conclusion:** Medical practitioners have great insight about the Physiotherapy profession. But it is observed that they are aware of different approaches but their referral rate to Gynecological, pediatrics and Geriatric care physiotherapist are less. The factors noted in this survey for low awareness were in accordance with most literature findings. The significant decrease in awareness requires more amount of knowledge to be given in the Medical field.

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INTRODUCTION

The foundation of Physiotherapy was laid in India in 1952 following a major epidemic of poliomyelitis in Mumbai & soon in 1953 the first school & centre for Physiotherapy was established in Mumbai as a joint collaborative project of Government of India, State Government & the then Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) with technical support by World Health Organization (WHO). Physiotherapy took a firm base around World War I when surgery gave rise to the new branch of orthopedics with improved treatment techniques & followed by rehabilitation of the injured soldiers. Physiotherapy is such an integral part of health care without which complete recovery of an individual with any disorder is not possible, but instead of this profession growing, it is on a decline in India said Choudhary, A. (2019).

Physicians like Hippocrates and Galen, were the first practitioners of physical therapy, they used massage, manual therapy, and hydrotherapy as therapies, with outstanding results, to treat people in the ancient times as physiotherapy is associated with identifying, function augmenting movement potential within the limitations of promotion, rehabilitation and prevention, this can be achieved by performing a systematic assessment of the body and by the application of a broad range of proficient technique such as the kinesiotherapy, electrotherapy and mobilization techniques commented by Vardhan, S. and Sharma, M. (2018). Physiotherapists are healthcare professionals who have undergone adequate and sufficient medical education to assess, treat and prevent dysfunction and impairments of movement in people of all ages and within a wide range of contexts, Bolarinde, O.S. and Owoyemi, V.T. (2020).

Agni, P. and Battin, S. (2017) denoted the completion of 65 years of physiotherapy in India and thus, necessitate the need to further assess the growth of physiotherapy knowledge amongst our country's caregivers. Physiotherapists are known to treat disease conditions antenatal and postnatal care for new mothers, stress incontinence, prolapsed and other concerns related to women's health and work in the promotion and maintenance of general health and fitness among the people. Apart from this, it even helps individuals with cardio respiratory and general surgical conditions (like asthma, tuberculosis, post-surgical cases such as cholecystectomy, rehabilitation of patients with intensive care unit, burns and other conditions.) Although physiotherapists practice independently of other healthcare services and also within interdisciplinary rehabilitation programs, the method of practicing physiotherapy as a first contact profession is in frequent since they often depend on referrals from practitioners from different fields. This has caused great concern to physiotherapists worldwide who have to depend on physician's practice of "prescribing physiotherapy". The growth and development of physiotherapy not just as a branch of health care but also regarding career and groundwork is dependent on the awareness of referring physicians and their acceptance of it. Since a physician's clinic is the primary reporting center in any condition, a physician awareness of the increasing advancement in physiotherapy and the role of a physiotherapist in a wide range of disease conditions can give timely references. He can help the patient understand his need for physiotherapy and initiate his rehabilitation process by acting as a link between the therapist and the patient, developing clear lines of communication and thereby making the rehabilitation journey a truly healthy and holistic experience.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

STUDY DESIGN: Self-administered Questionnaire form, Survey study **SAMPLE SIZE:** 98 medical practitioners were included in this study **SAMPLING METHOD:** Systemic sampling

SELECTION CRITERIA

INCLUSION CRITERIA

- Both Genders
- Medical Professionals

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- Subjects not willing to participate.
- Professionals (physiotherapist, Osteopaths, Chiropractors ,etc)
- Student and Internees

VARIABLES

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE: Medical Professional

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: Perception

MATERIAL REQUIRED: Questionnaire form

PROTOCOL

A self-administrated questionnaire was made in a Google form by generating the link of the questionnaire it has been shared via online whatsapp, Email, Facebook and distributed to the medical professionals of Delhi. The data has been recorded by Google spreadsheet by its own and it was observed that 16 participants are non-medical professionals or non-delhities, thus we had excluded the data gathered from 16 respondent remaining response of 82 participants was considered. By the use of Microsoft Excel 2007 and SPSS software (version 22.0) relevant descriptive statistical data was created and relationship between the variables was calculated by using Chi-square test and Pearson correlation test.

PROCEDURE

The subjects were selected as per the inclusion criteria. A verbal consent was taken from the subjects. The study was done with a detailed self administered questionnaire which includes closed ended questions based on the following contents.

Segment 1: Subjects personal information which includes Name, Age, Gender, Education, Working area, Occupation and Location.

Segment 2: This segment includes about the experience in his/her field work and awareness about the Physiotherapy. Encloses the question regarding the interrelation of their profession with the Physiotherapy department in their working place.

Segment 3: Concise questions about the effectiveness on their patient's health and the rising demand of the Physiotherapy interventions.

Segment 4: This section questions reveals the perception of the practitioners regarding the Physiotherapy Profession, and they are free to share their suggestion, if any. Subject filled up a form; we excluded the 16 forms as not lies under the selected inclusive criteria. Remaining data of 82 respondents was analyzed and result had been created. The questionnaire has been shared with Medical Practitioners via a Google form generated link through Whatsapp numbers, Facebook and E-mail Ids. Once the respondent fill up the form he/she can submit and the data has collected. Results were calculated directly by Google spreadsheet in terms of frequency distribution and descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

In this study, total number of participants who filled up the form is 92, from which 16 participants were excluded as they don't lie in our inclusion criteria may be they are non-medical practitioner or non-delhities. Thus 82 subjects response was considered for data analysis.

Demographic Data: Total of 92 respondent comprising of 38(46%) female and 44(54%) male. And 35% of practitioners are of age 20-30years, 26% from age 31-40 years, 15% & 17% are of age 41-50 & 51-60 years of age respectively whereas 4% of the population are lie in the age of 61-70 & 71-80years of age. There are 44% of physicians followed by 13% of dentist, 12% gynecologist, 6% orthopeditions, 6% paediatrician, 5% ENT's and 4% of cardiologists. From the total

population 92, 36 (44%) have experience of more 10years, 14 (17%) have 5 to 10years of experience, 18 (22%) have 3-5 years of experience and 14 (17%) have less than 3 years of working experience in his field. 29% are working in government hospitals, 38% of them are works in private hospitals, 30% works at their private clinical setup and 2% other working area.

Awareness of Physiotherapy: There is 100% of awareness among medical practitioners. 28(34%) claim that they do not have physiotherapy department in their working area and 54 (66%) claim that they do have physiotherapy department at working place. 80% of medical practitioners claim that they do refer their patients to physiotherapy department, whereas 11% denial of referring and 9% are not sure about it. 10% of practitioners claim that 30-70 patient on an average they refer to physiotherapy whereas 38% said they only refer less than 10 patients. It is seen that, 99% of population agreed with the effectiveness of physiotherapy and 99% of population totally agreed that the physiotherapy is growing day by day.

Perception of medical professionals' on working approach of Physiotherapy in Delhi: 85% of the population have a opinion that working approach of physiotherapy is an organized way in Delhi, whereas 6% of them said unorganized way and 9% have no opinion about it.,80% of population excepted that there is need of regulatory body and 20% have no opinion .

Correlation between observation and referral rate: From the data we gathered we got to know that 72% of selected medical professionals claimed that they believe physiotherapy is majorly effective in pre and post operative orthopedic conditions , 69.5% claimed that immensely helpful in neurological traumatic conditions , 45.1% state that it plays major role in sports injury rehabilitation and 58.5% have opinion that effective in rehabilitation care.

However importance and effectiveness in cardiac care (32.9%) women health (28%) pediatric (32.9%) and geriatric care (22%) shows the least observation by medical professionals, the mean percentage of the observational score of effectiveness if specialized field is 3.61with SD \pm 1.86. there is higher percentage of referral rate of orthopedic (63.4%), neurology (65.9%), and rehabilitation department (64.6%), which means practitioners have great insight regarding the importance and effectiveness of these services. The other specialized field of physiotherapy like cardio pulmonary 26.8%, pediatric 36.6%, geriatrics 19.5%, women health or gynecological conditions, 25.6% respectively , which shows theunawareness regarding the working approach of specialized field, having mean percentage of 3.39 with SD \pm 2.48.

Pearson's Correlation	Mean	SD	N	Correlation (r)	Table Value	P value
Referral score	3.39	2.483				
Observational score	3.31	1.858	82	0.459	0.217	0.001

Table 1: The Pearson correlation coefficient value of 0.459 and $p < 0.001$ confirm that there appears to be strong positive correlation between the two variables. Thus the perception and knowledge of the medical practitioners about the physiotherapy specialized fields gives direct impact on their lacking in referral rate to geriatric, pediatric, women health/gynecological physiotherapy.

Correlation of observational score with working profession of the medical practitioners

Demographic Variable		Correlation with Observational Score		df	Table value
Variable	Option	Chi test	P value		
Current workingprofession	Cardiologist	26.471	0.044	16	26.296
	Dentist				
	ENT				
	Gynecologist				
	M.D				
	Orthopaedician				
	Pediatrician				
	Physician Surgeon				

Table 2: This table implies that that the current working status of various medical professionals and their perception towards physiotherapy profession with referral score ($X^2 = 26.471$) shows significant result at $p < 0.005$.

Correlation of referral score with working profession of the medical practitioners

Demographic Variable		Correlation with Referral Score		Df	Tablevalve
Variable	Option	Chitest	P value		
Current working profession	Cardiologist	37.194	0.002	16	26.296
	Dentist				
	ENT				
	Gynecologist				
	M.D				
	Orthopaedician				
	Pediatrician				
	Physician Surgeon				

Table 3: This table implies that the current working status of various medical professionals and their perception towards physiotherapy profession with referral score ($X^2 = 37.194$) shows significant result at $p < 0.005$.

DISCUSSION

In less than a century, the profession of physical therapy has evolved rapidly, extending the scope of its functions, treatments and settings. Physiotherapy as a profession is gaining new horizons with its recent advances and evidence based practice. It aims with the level of assessment, treatment strategies catering the solutions for musculoskeletal, neurological and cardio-Respiratory conditions. Though this profession is advancing there still exists a need to create awareness among the medical professionals. Both the educational and professional changes that happen in the physiotherapy need to be understood by the public to benefit the health care process. The changes that are happening in the physiotherapy should reach the medicos to know the health benefits. Earlier access to physiotherapists was by referral from the medical practitioner, after this study it has revealed that there is no change in the scenario of referral letter from medical professionals. Changes must be taken place in order to expect from public to have an insight about the patient treatment so that direct patient access will improve rather than a referral from the medical practitioner. Unless the public are well informed about the particular role of the physiotherapist they will be disadvantaged when trying to obtain appropriate health care and presumably the services of the

physiotherapists. It will be less than fully utilized. In other words, as per the study which has been performed clearly shows that there is lack of the knowledge and awareness among medical professions about the different working specialized field of physiotherapy. Nowadays, the orthopedic department, Neurology department, Rehabilitation department & Sports physiotherapy gain the enlightenment in the medical field. Patients get easy access to the specialized treatment from Physiotherapist of respective condition of the patient. Other conditions of the patient like Gynecological, Pediatric disorder, Geriatric and ICU care Physiotherapy as in Cardiac rehabilitation and pulmonary rehabilitation have a huge importance in improving the life expectancy of the patient. Physiotherapy treatment is the multi-disciplinary approach to care is integral in promoting lung functions, reducing the incidence of the ventilator-associated pneumonia, facilitating weaning and promoting safe and early discharge from intensive care unit. Geriatric physiotherapy offers prevention and intervention measures to protect and enhance older people quality of life, provide tailored therapy for them with mobility and functional problem to improve day to day activities. Women's health Physiotherapy was founded from the clinical area of Obstetrics and gynecology and is the care of women in relation to childbirth, both antenatal and postnatal, treatment of incontinence and in case care of the women undergoing gynecological surgery.

At the same time, if attempts are to be made to raise the level of awareness of physiotherapy, it is necessary to assess the current attitude and knowledge of the medical professionals. In this study out of the Total population that is 44 were males and 38 were females. The overall score for those who were aware about physiotherapy was 98%. This clearly shows that the knowledge is considerably high in the particular working area of the practitioner. There was various categories mentioned different specialization in the field of physiotherapy. From which we can conclude that medical professionals are well aware about the specialized field and their working aspect as they referred the patient to Orthopedic, Neurology, Sports Department more than others like Rehabilitation, Geriatric, Pediatric, Gynecology Department. Practitioner's referral the patient to Gynecology, Pediatric and Geriatric Department is less which indicates the unawareness of practitioners about these fields, its working interventions. People do not have the knowledge about the existence and uses of physiotherapy and it being a part of the health care system. This may be due to the fact the people are unaware about the concept of direct referral to physiotherapy. The patient can directly refer to a physiotherapist for their pain management. By this survey method, it is the right time for the physiotherapist of physiotherapy profession to come out with new strategies with improvising the knowledge level of awareness and also to clarify the myths.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A large sample size could have provide more information about the perception of Medical professionals on Physiotherapy profession

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Further study should be done to know more about the perception, awareness and knowledge about physiotherapy in more specific profession of medical professional and can be

done in more number of populations for better insight about the relationship with physiotherapy profession.

CONCLUSION

From this, it is concluded that there is great awareness of the medical practitioners about the Orthopedic, neurology, sports and rehabilitation physiotherapy working approach and their interventions but the referral rate to these department are still lacking from the practitioner's side even though the practitioners who had many years of experience in his field has not given a satisfactory result in referring the patient to specialized physiotherapist and their observational score was also minimal, which reveals that there is higher percentage of unawareness among the medical professionals which has not been enhanced during the many years of establishment of varieties of specialized fields of physiotherapy such as cardiopulmonary care, pediatric care, geriatric care and gynecological / women health has not get into awareness among practitioners, they are unaware about the working interventions thus the referral rate is also least in number

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