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Knowledge and Perception about Physiotherapy in Patients Coming to the Hospital for the First Time

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ABSTRACT:

Physiotherapists provide services that develop, maintain and restore people's maximum movement and functional ability. They can help people at any stage of life, when movement and function are threatened by ageing, injury, diseases. In spite of people availing physiotherapy services, its perception and knowledge to a certain extent appears to be less. So this study was help to understand patient perception and knowledge about physiotherapy profession, in those are coming first time to see physiotherapist. The study was conducted in a questionnaire based interview format. All willing patients who are coming first time to see physiotherapists included, whereas those patients have language barrier were excluded. Subjects were briefed about the study, written consent was taken beforehand, and a validated questionnaire was personally given to fill in the details. The response, thus obtained, was taken up for further analysis. A total of 140 respondents comprising 74 men and 66 women participated in the study. According to this study, most of the patients have knowledge that physiotherapy means not massage therapy and physiotherapy cannot take only in case any injuries or pain, but also physiotherapy is helpful for elderly people. But they have lack of knowledge about role of physiotherapy in women's health and health care team. Their major sources of information are physicians or online application. The patients are aware and have some knowledge about physiotherapy through their physician, Therefore awareness and perception about physiotherapy should be made to such an extent that people visit physiotherapist directly without any reference.

KEYWORDS: Knowledge, Perception, physiotherapy, patients

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INTRODUCTION:

Physiotherapy is a health care profession. Physiotherapy completed more than 68 years in India. The foundation of Physiotherapy was laid in India in 1952 following a major epidemic of poliomyelitis in Mumbai & soon in 1953 the first school and 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)¹.

World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) defines Physical Therapy as providing services to people and populations to develop maintain and restore maximum movement and functional ability throughout the life-span. This includes providing services in circumstances where movement and function are threatened by ageing, injury, diseases, disorders, conditions or environmental factors and with the understanding that functional movement is central to what it means to be healthy².

Although physiotherapy has a great role to play in the society, it seems to lack a clear identity with the public who demonstrate limited awareness and understanding of the scope of the profession's role and have difficulty in differentiating it from alternate practitioners³.

According to Jackson's in 2004 lack of knowledge about profession may lead to misconception and inter profession conflicts⁴. Patients are always referred by medical professionals to physiotherapist. Therefore, improvement in profession should be made to such an extent that people visit physiotherapist directly without any reference⁵.

Physiotherapist has important role in healthcare system. After completing bachelor degree of physiotherapy, Physiotherapist can do specialization in various fields like musculoskeletal, neurological or neuroscience, cardio-respiratory, community and women's health, and sports. With the specialization, physiotherapist dealing with patients like traumatic or non-traumatic injuries, cardio-respiratory rehabilitation, post stroke rehabilitation, women's health in antenatal and postnatal period, general health of patients to give quality of life.

Physical therapists operate as independent practitioners as well as members of health service provider teams and are subject to the ethical principles of WCPT^{6,7}. They are able to act as first contact practitioners, and patients/clients may seek direct services without referral from another health professional⁸.

A good awareness of the entire health care system and not just the role of physiotherapy in healthcare delivery might create an impact by reducing the hospital stay, providing prompt recovery and mostly in the rehabilitation journey for an improved lifestyle which is the ultimate goal of any healthcare employee⁹.

All the above things, suggest that the awareness and knowledge regarding physiotherapy appears to be less in our country due to lack of literature in this regard. Thus, our study intends to find out the knowledge and perception about physiotherapy among patients coming to the hospital for the first time.

METHODOLOGY:

A total of 140 respondents comprising 74 (52.85%) men and 66 (47.14%) women participated in the study. The age of subjects was between 18 to 78 years old (mean age 40.25 ± 12.42). The study was conducted in a questionnaire based interview format in private hospital and government hospital in Pune. The patients who are coming first time to see physiotherapists and who understand local language (Marathi and Hindi) or English language are included in study whereas patients have language barrier as excluded in study. A written informed consent was taken from participants and the study explained to them. A self-made questionnaire containing 10 close ended and 1 open ended questions was administered to all the participants. The questionnaire was validated by the experts in the field and after doing a pilot study on 10 participants the questionnaire was finalized and this final version used for data collection. The researcher was present during the study in order to clarify any doubts regarding the questionnaire. Once all the questions are answered, the questionnaire was collected on the spot from the participants.

RESULT: The data was analyzed by descriptive statistics in excel

Table 1: Percentages Response of Questions

Sr.No	Questions	Response (percentages)		
		Yes	No	DK
1	Need other doctors reference to see PT	35%	48.57%	16.42%
2	PT means massage therapy	12.14%	69.28%	18.57%
3	Any health professionals perform PT	18.57%	70.71%	10.71%
4	Does PT have side effects	2.10%	72.14%	25.71%
5	Is PT used only in case of injuries	14.28%	71.42%	14.28%
6	Are all PT procedures painful	12.14%	70%	17.85%
7	Is PT taken only in case of pain	34.28%	50%	15.71%
8	Is PT suitable for elderly people	75%	5%	20%
9	Is PT harmful in pregnancy	13.57%	28.57%	57.85%
	Total	24.12%	53.96%	21.9%

Table 2: Percentages Response of What do you mean of physiotherapy

Sr.No	Question	Response (percentages)			
		Exercise	Pain Relief	Massage or Muscles Relaxation	Others
10	What do you mean by PT	66.66%	15.47%	10.71%	13.09%

Table 3: Percentages Response of Sources of Information

11	Sources of Information about PT	Response (percentages)			
		DR	WC	FRI	OTH
A	Personal Contact	83.57%	2.14%	11.42%	8.57%
B	Mass Media	OA	TV/R	AD	P
		44.23%	23.07%	28.84%	9.61%

ABBREVIATIONS:

PT - Physiotherapy, **DK**- Don't Know, **DR**- Doctors, **WC** - Work Colleagues, **Fri** - Friends, **Oth**- Others, **OA**- Online Apps, **TV/R**- Television/Radio, **AD**- Advertisements, **P**- Pamphlets.

DISCUSSION:

The aim of the study was to determine the knowledge and perception about physiotherapy among patients coming to the hospital for the first time and also the author tried to identify the sources of information about physiotherapy among the patients.

The survey helped to understand existing knowledge, perception and awareness about physiotherapy among patients. According to this study most of the patients have knowledge that physiotherapy means not massage therapy and physiotherapy cannot take only in case any injuries or pain, but also physiotherapy is helpful for elderly people. But they have lack of knowledge about role of physiotherapy in women's health and health care team.

The results show that patient believe that there is no need of reference to see physiotherapists but still there are study by Agni P & Battin S (2017), awareness of physiotherapy among general practitioners⁹. Which shows that, there is higher rate of reference from physician instead of directly come to physiotherapist.

In a survey done by Kumar V (2013) which, aimed to find out the awareness about physiotherapy among the population residing in and around Hongasandra in Bangalore¹⁰. At the end of the study they concluded that there exists a need for physiotherapy as a profession to address the public about the awareness of the recent advances as well as the kind of service provided.

According to the analysis of the obtained data, it was observed that of major sources of information are general physicians or online application like Practo. The results of which were similar to the study conducted by Avichoudhary, awareness and perception of physiotherapy among general population in delhi¹¹. In their survey had a similar finding in which it was noted that most of the population were aware of this field. The major source of the information was healthcare practitioners and newspaper.

CONCLUSION:

According to this study, patients are aware of physiotherapy through their general physician or other doctors but there is lack of knowledge about different domains of physiotherapy. So, we need to improve patient perception about physiotherapy and the conditions that a physiotherapist can deal with it.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY: Author did not segregate the participants according to educational level and geographical status.

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a] Yes () b] No () c] Don't know ()

8) Is physiotherapy suitable for elderly people?

a] Yes () b] No () c] Don't know ()

9) Is physiotherapy harmful in pregnancy?

a] Yes () b] No () c] Don't know ()

10) What do you mean by Physiotherapy?

11) Sources of information about Physiotherapy:

A] Personal contact:

- 1) Doctors referral []
- 2) Work colleagues []
- 3) Friends []
- 4) Others []

B) Mass media:

- 1) Online app (like Practo) []
 - 2) Radio/TV []
 - 3) Advertisement []
 - 4) Pamphlet []
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