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### **Awareness and Perception of Physiotherapy among General Population in Delhi**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

It is well established that Physiotherapy has a vital role in health promotion, prevention and treatment of a wide spectrum of disorders. In spite of people availing physiotherapy services its awareness to a certain extent appears to be less. The purpose of this study was to find level of awareness of Physiotherapy among general population and to ascertain the public's perception of physiotherapy. A sample of 250 individuals was drawn from the general public at various markets in Delhi, India. An explanation was given to subjects about the study and informed consent was obtained from them. They completed a structured questionnaire designed to test knowledge of physiotherapy profession and services provided by physiotherapists. Two hundred (80%) of the respondents had previous knowledge of physiotherapy as a profession. The news paper and healthcare professionals were the main sources of their information, with newspapers reported as the major sources. Majority of the respondents 178, (71.2%) stated that physiotherapy services can be received in hospitals. Majority of the respondents gave the response that physiotherapists treat disorders affecting bones and joints 120, (48%) while 105 (42%) responded that physiotherapists treat disorders affecting muscles and nerves.. Majority of the participants were aware of the field of physiotherapy. However, there is still the need to increase the knowledge by educating people on various specialities and benefits of physiotherapy.

**KEYWORDS:** Physiotherapy, general population.

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## INTRODUCTION

Physiotherapy is defined as 'A Health care profession concerned with human function & movement & maximizing its potential. It uses physical approaches to promote, maintain & restore physical, psychological & social wellbeing, taking account of variations in health status.'<sup>1</sup>

Physiotherapists are health care professionals who maintain, restore and improve movement, activity and health for individuals in all age groups. In some continents, they are addressed as Physical therapists and in other continents as Physiotherapists. Physiotherapists are involved in health promotion, prevention and treatment of diseases to ensure optimal functioning and better quality of life of individuals and population.<sup>2</sup> 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).<sup>3</sup>

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 differentiating it from alternate practitioners.<sup>4</sup> The role of a Physiotherapist is to deal with application of physiotherapy skills & knowledge to the assessment, design, delivery & evaluation of physiotherapeutic treatments in the management of the various conditions of acute or chronic sickness, disability or handicap. Physiotherapy took a firm base around World War I when surgery gave rise to the new branch of orthopaedics with improved treatment techniques & followed by rehabilitation of the injured soldiers<sup>1</sup>.

Despite having wide role, the extent of awareness about physiotherapy among public as a crucial health care partner is still doubtful. One probable reason may be lack of awareness among population and other health care team members on the scope of this profession. Awareness about physiotherapy is very important in development of this. This study was undertaken to assess the level of awareness and knowledge about physiotherapy among the general public in New Delhi.

## METHODOLOGY-

### A) *Sampling method:*

Random sampling.

### B) *Sample size:*250

### C) *Inclusion criteria:*

➤ Both male and female.

- Subjects who knows local language / English for communication.
- Subjects who are willing to participate
- Age group 20-65.

**D) Exclusion criteria:**

- Subjects who are not willing to participate
- Physiotherapists.
- Other medical and healthcare practitioners.
- Subjects who cannot comprehend/ complete the Questionnaire.

**Procedure:**

Data was collected with a survey questionnaire which comprised closed ended questions. It was tested by conducting a pilot study on subjects (n=35) from local population.

Framing a questionnaire:

1. Do you know what is physiotherapy?
2. Have you ever received physiotherapy treatment?
3. What are different specialities in physiotherapy?
4. What kind of disorders a physiotherapist deals with?
5. knowledge of treatment modalities used in Physiotherapy
6. role of physiotherapist in health sector.
7. Source of information.

A sample of 250 subjects who met the inclusion criteria was included from the local market. Entire procedure was explained and informed consent was obtained from them. Then, questionnaire was administered to those subjects to assess their knowledge about the physiotherapy.

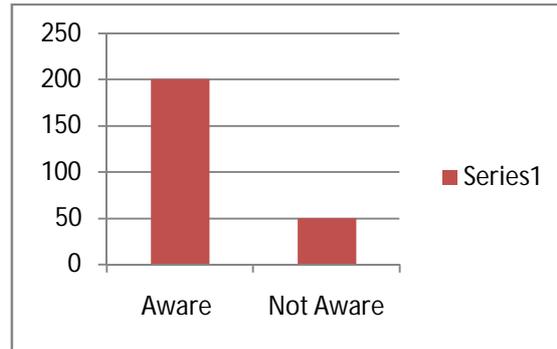
**RESULT**

Data was analyzed using, Microsoft excel. Questionnaire was distributed to 300 subjects. Out of which, 250 responded and filled the questionnaire.

***Demographic characteristics of respondents***

A total of 250 respondents comprising 150 (60%) men and 100 (40%) women participated in the study. They were aged 20-65 years.

1. ***Knowledge about physiotherapy-*** Among the participants, 200 (80%) were aware of physiotherapy while 50 (20%) were not aware of physiotherapy and 155 subjects and one of their family member have received physiotherapy treatment previously and 135 obtained relief.

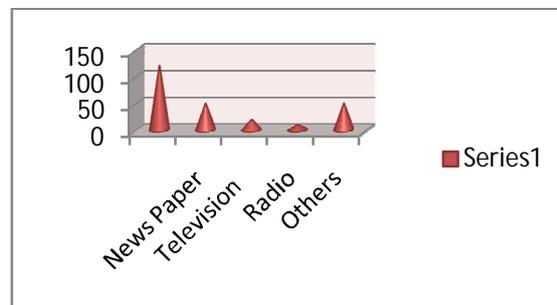


**Graph 1- Awareness about physiotherapy**

There was a varied response showing more awareness in musculoskeletal, sports and neurological dysfunctions. In the field of cardiac, pulmonary and community rehabilitation the percentage was however less. Some fields such as paediatric and women health and obstetrics fared poorly on awareness.

**2. Source of information about physiotherapy-**

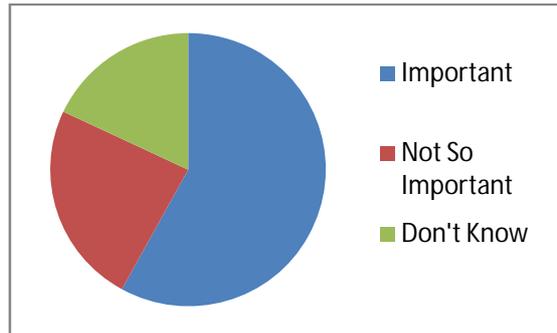
The sources of information about physiotherapy services included information obtained from health professionals (n=120), newspapers (n=50), television (n=20), radio (n=10), and other sources (n=50) such as relations who benefited from physiotherapy services and advertisement on public places.



**Graph 1- Source of information**

**3. Role of physiotherapy in health sector-**

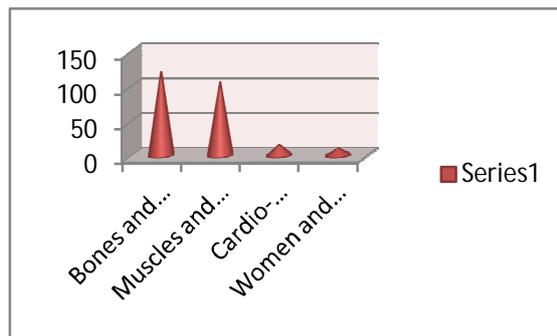
145 reported that physiotherapy is important in health sector while 60 reported as not so important rest 45 don't know.



**Graph 3- Role in health sector**

#### 4. Knowledge about disorders treated by physiotherapy-

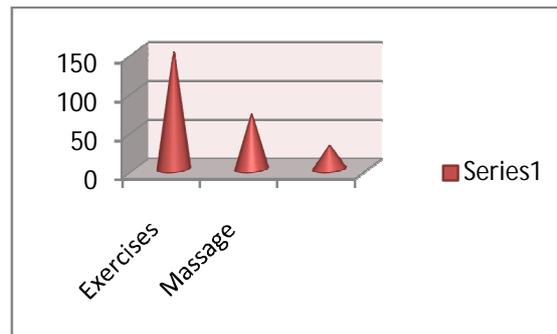
Participants were asked about their knowledge of various condition a physiotherapist deals with. Majority of the respondents gave the response that physiotherapists treat disorders affecting bones and joints 120, (48%) while 105 (42%) responded that physiotherapists treat disorders affecting muscles and nerves. Only 10 4.4% believed that physiotherapists also deals with women health and gynaecological health. Less 15 were aware of the fact that physiotherapists' treats manage disorders of the cardio-respiratory system and sports



**Graph 4- Knowledge about disorders treated by physiotherapy**

#### 5. Treatment modalities used in Physiotherapy

The participants' knowledge of the different treatment modalities used by physiotherapy knowledge that physiotherapists employ exercise 150 as the main and frequently used modality for treatment, while 70 knew that physiotherapists use massage as modality for treatment. Knowledge about electricity modalities and wax, water was very less. 30



**Graph 5- Treatment modalities**

## DISCUSSION

In this study, we tried to identify the level of awareness about physiotherapy and their services among general population of Delhi. According to this study, most of the population were aware of this field. The major source of the information was healthcare practitioners and news paper. Among the subjects, who have previously received physiotherapy treatment had a positive attitude towards the physiotherapy services. Out of them, most subjects were of opinion that these services can be received in hospitals and private clinics as well. According to this study, most people believe that physiotherapy deals with problems of bone and joint. This study suggested that Indian population is least aware of the fact that physiotherapy services also deals with women health, paediatric problems and burns. According g to most subjects, it is very important part of the healthcare sector.

A review by Anila Paul in the year 2015 on awareness of Physiotherapy across the globe included studies conducted from 1979 till 2015 were included lead to the conclusion that there is less awareness regarding the field even in countries with high HDI. Hence measures to improve awareness are urgently required.<sup>2</sup>

In developed countries, direct access to Physiotherapists is practiced, where patient directly approaches Physiotherapists for health care services without referral from medical practitioner or any other health care professional.<sup>4</sup> However, in developing country like India and least developed countries like Sudan, patients are referred by medical practitioner with a referral letter for receiving Physiotherapy services. Lack of accurate information about competence of Physiotherapists among Physicians, can lead to underutilization of skills and resources of this potential profession.<sup>5</sup>in our study, healthcare practitioners are among the major source of awareness about physiotherapy[y among general population.

In Europe, majority of the public are aware of physiotherapy services and have knowledge on what the profession entails, such that there is a high demand for the services of physiotherapists among the people. In Australia, physiotherapists enjoy professional autonomy and the level of

awareness is high. In Japan, many high school students lack appropriate information about the physiotherapy profession and are therefore unaware of the vast career opportunities open to them.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Limitations of the study***

- small sample size
- Small geographical area covered by the survey.
- Limited time.

### **CONCLUSION**

According to this study, most people are aware of physiotherapy but don't have any knowledge about the speciality of physiotherapy. So, we need to improve people awareness about the conditions that a physiotherapist can deal with and also where they can receive physiotherapy services.

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