



RESEARCH ARTICLE

AWARENESS OF PHYSIOTHERAPY AMONG GENERAL PRACTITIONERS IN
A DISTRICT OF PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

Background: Physiotherapy is also known as rehabilitation science, which helps to improve an individual's ability to lead an active and a healthy lifestyle. Physiotherapists especially in India, are relying on the physicians as their primary source of reference. A physician can help the patients by timely referring them to a physiotherapist, which can help in proper and effective rehabilitation of the patient. Therefore this study was conducted, in order to know how aware the physicians are in terms of need of physiotherapy for their patients.

Materials and Methods: This study was conducted in Jalandhar city, a district in Punjab state, involving 102 physicians of the city by a questionnaire format, over a period of 6 months from February 2017 to July 2017. All willing general practitioners from various streams along with super specialists were included in the study.

Results: There was awareness regarding physiotherapy among general practitioners of Jalandhar city. With respect to various branches of physiotherapy, Neurology was the most known to physicians accounting for 84(82.3%) out of 102 physicians knowing about it, followed by orthopedic physiotherapy known to 82(80.3%) physicians, followed by awareness of Sports rehabilitation in 54(52.9%) physicians.

Conclusion: The study concludes 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.

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INTRODUCTION

India is a country of diversity. Therefore not only allopathic medicines are being taken by the patients, but various indigenous systems of medicine like Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Homeopathy, Yoga, and Naturopathy are also getting the attention of the patients as they are also helping in improving the quality of life of the patients. Nowadays a combination of these systems are becoming prevalent along with the physiotherapy care to improve the overall wellbeing. In recent times, Health services are being delivered by both public and private setups, which varies from private clinics to corporate hospitals and tertiary care centres. All these come with varied specialties; and they work for the betterment of mankind, including physiotherapy, since they are at the "top of the pyramid" of healthcare profession (Silva, 2015).

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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 well (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physical_therapy) 65 years of physiotherapy in India were completed in the year 2017 (Shimpi, 2014), still there is lack of awareness amongst the various healthcare providers and therefore, this study was carried out to know the degree of awareness about physiotherapy amongst the various healthcare providers. Since physiotherapy is associated with identifying, functioning and augmenting movement potential within the limitations of promotion, rehabilitation and prevention (Deepa Abhichandani, 2015), this can be achieved by performing a systematic assessment of the various systems of the human body and by the application of a broad range of proficiencies such as the kinesiotherapy, electrotherapy and mobilization techniques. When body functioning is threatened by aging, diseases or environmental factors, individuals can be benefited by physiotherapy. It helps in maximizing the quality of life, by

working on the physical, mental and social well-being of an individual (Shimpi, 2014). Since Physiotherapy is a non-invasive and cost effective technique, it is rapidly gaining popularity among the people. 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 infrequent since they often depend on referrals from practitioners from different fields (Deepa Abhichandani, 2015).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in Jalandhar city, a district in Punjab state, over a period of 6 months from February 2016 to July 2016. A total of 102 physicians were enrolled in the study, including Allopathic specialists and superspecialists, Ayurvedic, Homeopathic physicians. The study was conducted in the form of a questionnaire method. All practitioners who were willing to take part in the study were enrolled in the study and were given a preformed and validated questionnaire format. The data thus obtained was entered in Microsoft excel programme and was expressed in percentage and proportion.

MBBS degree holders. 19(18.6%) Ayurvedic Physicians with BAMS degree participated in the study, followed by

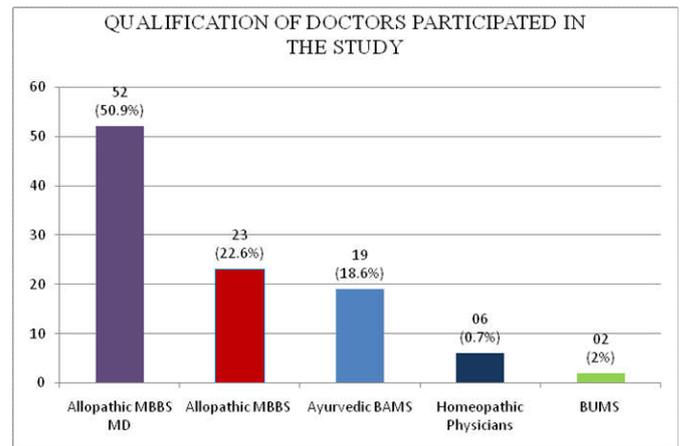


Figure 1. Distribution of data based on the qualification of physicians

Table 1. Questionnaire format included in the study

S.No	Questionnaire	Options	Response with (Percentage)
1.	Have you heard about the term Physiotherapy?	Yes	102(100%)
		No	0
2.	Are you aware of the need of physiotherapy in today's time?	Yes	102(100%)
		No	0
3.	What is the course of physiotherapy?	BPT(Bachelor)	102(100%)
		MPT(Master's)	70(68.6%)
		PhD(Doctorate)	0
4.	What all are the various fields of physiotherapy? Do you know about them?	Musculoskeletal rehabilitation	82(80.3%)
		Community-based rehabilitation	11(10.7%)
		Cardio respiratory	22(21.5%)
		Neurosciences	84(82.3%)
		Sports	54(52.9%)
5.	What are the fields in which a physiotherapist has a role to play to improve the patient's quality of life?	Orthopaedics rehabilitation	82(80.3%)
		Neurological Rehabilitation	84(82.3%)
		Sports Injuries	54(52.9%)
		Burns	24(23.5%)
		Paediatric/Geriatric/Pregnant (Special Population)	13(12.7%)
		ICU care	41(40.1%)
		Chronic Debilitating Illnesses	28(27.4%)
6.	Are you aware of the physiotherapists/physiotherapy clinics in your city?	Yes	88(86.3%)
		No	14(13.7%)
7.	Do you feel the importance of CME's/ Lectures on physiotherapy to improve its awareness among physicians	Yes	102(100%)
		No	0
8.	Do you often refer patients for Physiotherapy?	Yes	71(69.6%)
		No	31(30.4%)
9.	Do you educate patients about the use of physiotherapy in their overall wellbeing?	Yes	15(14.7%)
		No	87(85.3%)
10.	Knowledge of the interventions used by physiotherapists to improve the patient's health?	Exercises/ Massage	102(100%)
		Electrical therapy	02(2%)
		Heat therapy	81(79.4%)
		Cold therapy	81(79.4%)
11.	After attending physiotherapy sessions, do you find significant improvement in patient's health?	Yes	100(98%)
		No	02(2%)

Observations

The present study had the following observations:

The above figure shows the distribution of the data based on the qualification of the participant doctors in the study. As shown in the figure, 52(50.9%) of the physicians were MBBS, MD qualified, followed by 23(22.6%) doctors who were

Homeopathic and Unani medicine practicing physicians with 06(0.7%) and 02(2%) physicians respectively. The above mentioned questionnaire was given to each participant of this study and their responses were evaluated and expressed in percentage. Most of the physicians were aware of the role of physiotherapy in neurological sciences with 84(82.3%) physicians knowing about it, followed by musculoskeletal rehabilitation knowledge in 82(80.3%) physicians.

Table 2. Comparison of the present study with other studies

S.No	Observations in Various Studies	Present Study(2017)
1.	Acharya RS <i>et al</i> (2011) ^[5] – 1). Physiotherapists deal with patients in Intensive care 2). Maximum referrals were for Orthopedic rehabilitation	1). 41(40%) physicians think physiotherapist has a key role to play in Patients of Intensive care. 2). Maximum referrals were of neurological rehabilitation (82.3%), followed by (80.3%) for orthopedic rehabilitation.
2.	Shimpi A <i>et al</i> (2014) ^[3] – 1). 100% awareness among physicians regarding physiotherapy.	1). 100% awareness among physicians regarding physiotherapy.
3.	Agni P & Battin S(2017) ^[8] – 1). Lesser awareness among physicians regarding role of physiotherapist in treating Intensive care patients. 2). Community based rehabilitation was a lesser known aspect of physiotherapy	1). 41(40%) physicians think physiotherapist has a key role to play in Patients of Intensive care. 2). 11(10.7%) physicians knew regarding community based rehabilitation

DISCUSSION

This study was undertaken to know the awareness of physicians towards physiotherapy as in today's time when the human life has become sedentary, the diseases are taking a high toll of human life. In the present study, 102(100%) of the physicians, irrespective of their qualification, were aware of the term physiotherapy and its need in improving the overall quality of life of the patients. This finding in the present study is supported by the study done by Acharya *et al.* (Acharya, 2011) Shimpi *et al.* (Shimpi, 2014). In the present study, only 70(68.6%) physicians were aware of the post graduate courses in physiotherapy while none of them had heard PhD courses in physiotherapy. The reason for this finding can be attributed to very less number of institutions offering post-graduate courses in this field. That could be the reason why physiotherapy in a country like india is still in its infancy. The present study suggests that according to 41(40%) of the physicians, physiotherapist deals with the patients in intensive care units. This finding is supported by the study done by Acharya AS (Acharya, 2011) which states that, In developed countries, physiotherapy has a crucial part in the assessment and rehabilitation of patients in the ICUs, to manage cardio-respiratory, neurological and musculoskeletal complications. In the present study, most cases referred by the physicians were of neurological rehabilitation accounting for 84(82.3%), followed by patients referred for Orthopaedic rehabilitation 82(80.3%). Similar results were seen in the studies done by Childs *et al.* (Childs, 2006), Cremin MC, Finn AM (Cremin, 2000) and Acharya R S *et al.* (Cremin, 2000).

Conclusion

The present study concludes that there is 100% awareness about physiotherapy among general practitioners. Neurological rehabilitation and orthopedic rehabilitation are amongst the popular areas of interest of physicians. Furthermore studies involving larger number of physicians, interns, surgeons should be conducted in order to spread awareness among doctors regarding emerging role of physiotherapy in order to promote healthy living and improving Quality of life.

ABBREVIATIONS

BPT – Bachelor of Physiotherapy
CME – Continuing medical education
ICU - Intensive Care Unit
MPT – Master of Physiotherapy

Source of Funding: NIL.

Conflicts of Interest – NONE DECLARED

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