

Awareness About Physiotherapy among University Staffs

Harikrishnan Ranganathan¹, Kamalambal H.²

¹Senior Lecturer, Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences and PhD Scholar, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia, ²Independent Researcher, Malaysia

Abstract

Aim: This study aims to explore the awareness about Physiotherapy among University staffs in Malaysia

Method: This is an institution based cross-sectional study. This study was conducted as a whole population study as all the staffs in one campus of a reputed university in Malaysia was approached to participate in the study. The staffs of Physiotherapy department were excluded from the study. The obtained data was analysed using frequency and percentage.

Results: Most of the respondents recognize Physiotherapy as unique profession but still majority of them have a wrong perception like masseurs are Physiotherapist, Physiotherapy as indigenous treatment method and acupuncture as a branch of Physiotherapy. Majority of them aware about the use of Physiotherapy in Musculoskeletal, cardio-respiratory, Neurological specialties but the awareness in other specialties such as pediatrics and women's health are not satisfactory.

Conclusion: The awareness about the role of physiotherapy must be enhanced in fields such as Pediatrics, women's health and cardiorespiratory. The perception about the Physiotherapy profession need to be enhanced.

Keywords: Awareness, Perception, Physiotherapy, University, Cross-sectional study, Malaysia.

Introduction

Physiotherapy or Physical therapy (PT) is a health care profession. "Physical therapists provide services that develop, maintain and restore people's maximum movement and functional ability"¹. The scope for PT practice is dynamic and it is evolving with needs of the society². According to Malaysian Physiotherapy association³ the profession is existing more than 25 years and it is also expected there would be 19,000 physiotherapists by 2020 in Malaysia .

The term awareness refers knowledge that something exists, or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience⁴. A good awareness of the health care system would develop a faster recovery and an enhanced lifestyle⁵.

More reasonable number of studies about the awareness of physiotherapy have been conducted in the countries with very high Human development Index⁶. Most of the studies were conducted among higher secondary students^{7,8,9,10,11}, health care students¹², medical interns^{13,14}, Medical practitioners¹⁵, Physicians¹⁶, specific potential client population such as sports players¹⁷, pregnant women¹⁸ and other professionals like anganwadi workers¹⁹, Primary school teachers²⁰. Most of this are regional studies.

Very few studies were conducted among general public. A study among rural population in Nigeria²¹ concluded majority of the respondents heard about physiotherapy, another study in Australia²² among

Corresponding Author:

Harikrishnan Ranganathan

Senior Lecturer, Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences and PhD Scholar, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
e-mail: hari4physio@gmail.com

general public shown a very good awareness about physiotherapy and reasonably very high awareness about the role of Physiotherapy in certain specialty when compared to others, which is similar to the research conducted among both health professional and public by Devanshi Doshi²³. The research findings of the study conducted among residents of Kansas City and Topeka metropolitan in United states inferred, majority of the public recognized musculoskeletal as the practice areas of Physiotherapy followed by neurology and cardiopulmonary. Secondhand knowledge is the common source of information which include media, information from physician, family member or friends²⁴.

To the best of our knowledge we are not able to track any study related to awareness about Physiotherapy conducted in Malaysia. This study is one of the pioneer studies in Malaysia intended to analyze the general awareness about physiotherapy, awareness to specific specialty of physiotherapy and the mode of awareness. Inferring the awareness among public regarding the development of Physiotherapy profession would gauge to build an appropriate promotional strategy²⁵. It would also provide the data of existing misconceptions about the profession which need to be rectified.

This study selected university staffs as they can be considered as a community and moreover, they are potential clients or ambassadors for family members to seek physiotherapy treatment. The level of education has impact on knowledge related to scope of physiotherapy²⁴.

Aim: The primary aim of this study is to know the awareness level about Physiotherapy among university staffs. The secondary aim is to know the level of awareness in different fields of Physiotherapy among university staffs.

Materials & Method

Materials: A survey was conducted using a questionnaire that was adapted with permission from a similar study done by Thusharika D. Dissanyaka⁹. The questionnaire consists of three Parts. Part A consists of subjective information. Part B consists of seven close ended questions. Part C consists of a close ended question with multiple options.

Methodology: This study is an institution based cross-sectional study conducted with the approval from University ethics committee. This study was conducted as a whole population study as all the staffs (except

physiotherapy department staffs) in a Private University, Malaysia were approached to participate in this study.

Results

The respondent's level of education is tabulated in Table 1. Majority of the participant possess bachelor's and above qualification.

General Awareness about Physiotherapy: The questions related to general awareness of Physiotherapy was provided in Part B.

Despite respondent recognize Physiotherapy as a unique profession rather than practiced by doctors (Table 2), majority of them believe Masseurs are Physiotherapist and it is associated as an indigenous treatment method. Almost majority of them recognize acupuncture as a branch of PT.

Awareness about role of Physiotherapy: Majority of them are aware about the role of physiotherapy (Table 2).

Awareness about components of Physiotherapy unit: Majority of them have awareness about the component of Physiotherapy unit (Table 3) The highest number of respondents believe Physiotherapy unit comprises of exercise machines (91%) followed by therapeutic pool (75%).

Physiotherapy Service Provider: Majority of them aware about the places to avail physiotherapy services (Table 3) perhaps the least number of respondents answered that Physiotherapy services are provided by Non-government organizations.

Mode of Physiotherapy Treatment: Majority of the respondents aware about all the listed modes of Physiotherapy treatment (Table 4).

Consultation of team Physiotherapist: Majority (>70%) of the respondents aware regarding when to meet the team Physiotherapist (Table 4).

Uses of Physiotherapy in Various Specialty: Among the various specialty listed (Table 5), respondents felt Physiotherapy is highly useful in Musculoskeletal condition (84%) followed by neurological conditions (63%). It was noticed moderate awareness about the uses of PT in chest conditions (55%) and less awareness in pediatric conditions (48%) and Women's health (41%).

Sources of information about Physiotherapy:

Tables 6 illustrates the sources of information about physiotherapy. The highest source of information through personal contacts would be from their friends in physiotherapy profession (46%). This also probable source of information about physiotherapy. The information about physiotherapy thru family physician is very least level (4%).

The social media such as internet (77.45%) and newspaper or magazine (51.56%) is the most common source of information about physiotherapy.

Table 1. Level of Education

Level of Education	Percentage
Diploma	1.96
Bachelors	34.31
Certificate	0.9
Masters	29.41
PhD	4.9
No Response	28.43

Table 2. Basic awareness about physiotherapy & Role of Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy is,	Correct answer %	Physiotherapy,	Correct answer %
practiced by the doctors	65	involved in rehabilitation of injuries	91
Acupuncture is a branch of Physiotherapy	51	helps in improving quality of life of injured person	98
Masseurs are physiotherapists.	39	helps in improving fitness level of sportsmen.	88
an indigenous treatment method.	47	helps in regaining activities of daily living.	92

Table 3. Components of Physiotherapy Unit & Physiotherapy Service provider

A Physiotherapy unit includes	Correct answer %	Places to get physiotherapy services,	Correct answer %
a gymnasium with exercising machines, gym balls and other equipment.	91	private clinics	75
electrical modalities	67	government hospitals	95
a section for manual treatments using bandages, tapes and splints	67	private hospitals	99
a therapeutic pool	75	NGOs	52

Table 4. Modes of Physiotherapy treatment & Consultation of team Physiotherapist

Physiotherapy include	Correct answer%	Do you know when to meet the team physiotherapist?	Correct answer %
Manual therapy	93	When you have an injury.	82
ice/heat therapy	86	When there is pain arising in any part with or without a known cause	83
Hydrotherapy	73	When you feel pain or discomfort in any of the sporting technique.	93
electrotherapy and exercise therapy	95	When you have fever or flu.	82

Table 5. Uses of Physiotherapy in Various Specialty

Uses of physiotherapy in any other conditions than in sport injuries	Correct answer %
Neurological conditions	63
Pediatric conditions	48
Chest conditions (Cardio respiratory conditions)	55
Musculoskeletal conditions (Orthopaedic conditions)	84
Women's health (Obstetric & Gynecological conditions)	41

Table 6. Sources of information about Physiotherapy

Personal Contact		Mass Media	
Family member was a client	26%	Television	42.18%
Friend was a client	21%	Films	17.65%
I was a client	26%	Internet	77.45%
Friend told me	28%	Newspaper or magazine	51.96%
My family physician told me	4%	Books	43.14%
Family member is a Physiotherapist	8%	Advertisements	28.43%
Friend is a therapist	46%	Radio	12.75%

Discussion

This study was conducted to evaluate the level of awareness towards physiotherapy among University staffs. Majority of them recognize Physiotherapy as unique profession and aware about the role of Physiotherapy, components of Physiotherapy unit, Physiotherapy service provider, mode of Physiotherapy treatment, role of sports physiotherapist. Most of the respondents at least possess a bachelor's degree. A slight correlation between education level and the knowledge related to scope of Physiotherapy is noticed in a previous study²⁴. More over the Physiotherapy programme is offered more than a decade in this university, this also would be the probable reason for good awareness.

It is also noticed that many university staff assume masseurs are Physiotherapist. Masseurs provide massages to the clients²⁶ whereas Physiotherapists offer services that enhance, maintain and reestablish people's maximum movement & functional ability¹. The word masseur and Physiotherapist cannot be used interchangeably. Though Physiotherapist practice massage as a part of their treatment technique on the other hand all masseurs are not Physiotherapist.

Many respondents perceived physiotherapy

as an indigenous treatment but, Physiotherapy is a science-based profession²⁷ and the course is offered from diploma to doctorate level. Similarly, many university staffs responded acupuncture as a branch of Physiotherapy which is not correct. Acupuncture is a technique where certain points on the body are stimulated by inserting thin needles through the skin most often²⁸. The above findings suggest that, though the public aware about Physiotherapy but there is a lack of complete understanding about the profession which is similar to the findings of Kacie Rognile²⁴.

It was inferred majority of the respondent aware about the use of Physiotherapy in Musculoskeletal, cardio-respiratory, Neurological specialties but the awareness in other specialties such as pediatrics and women's health are not satisfactory. There is a need to enhance the awareness of physiotherapy to increase the functional outcome⁶ especially the awareness must be increased in the field of women's health and pediatrics.

“Awareness is like the sun, when it shines on things, they are transformed²⁹. Lack of adequate knowledge about the profession would be disadvantageous to the profession²⁴. The awareness about the profession and the scope of practice required to be enhanced. This can be achieved by using digital and social media, TV

and newspaper³⁰, celebrating world Physical therapy day³¹, developing online posters³², developing a strong partnership with general practitioner³³, arranging interdepartmental continuous medical education programme to show case the professional development¹⁴. The main sources of information based on this study are Physiotherapy friends and internet and hence this medium can be used to promote physiotherapy. As doctors are vital for recommending and communicate about the physiotherapy²², they should be requested to be a part of Physiotherapy promotion campaigns in the future.

The Malaysian Physiotherapy Association also have a mission to increase the awareness about Physiotherapy in Malaysia³⁴. Abd Razak Zakaria³⁵ advocated to include Physiotherapy as a subject in higher secondary curriculum in Malaysia. This measure also would enhance the awareness about the profession among the future work force. Apart from this, more studies to be conducted to know the existing level of awareness, attitude about the physiotherapy profession among the various communities in Malaysia to design the appropriate promotional strategies.

The findings of this study are not critically discussed in detail because there is lack of research evidences in Malaysia related to this topic and there are very limited studies about the awareness of Physiotherapy among general public and academic staffs globally.

Conclusion

Majority of the respondents recognize Physiotherapy as unique profession but still they have a wrong perception about the profession. Most of them aware about the role of Physiotherapy, components of Physiotherapy unit, Physiotherapy service provider, mode of Physiotherapy treatment, role of sports physiotherapist. They aware about the use of Physiotherapy in certain specialty (Musculoskeletal, cardio-respiratory, Neurology) when compared to other specialty (pediatrics and women's health). Friends and internet are the major source of information about Physiotherapy. Measures need to be taken to enhance the awareness.

Limitations: The findings of this study cannot be generalized to public in Malaysia because this study is conducted among academic staffs in a private university. Moreover, there are few expatriate academic staffs participated in this study, so the findings are not attributed only to Malaysian academic staffs.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

Sources of Funding: Self

Ethical Clearance: We obtained approval from Ethics in Human Research Committee of Asia Metropolitan University.

References

1. World Confederation of Physical Therapy. (n.d.). What is Physical Therapy?[Internet] Available at: <https://www.wcpt.org/what-is-physical-therapy>[Accessed 6 Apr. 2019].
2. American Physical Therapy Association, editor. Today's Physical Therapist: A Comprehensive Review of a 21st-Century Health Care Profession: American Physical Therapy Association; 2011.
3. Mpa.net.my. (n.d.). History.[Internet]Available at: <https://www.mpa.net.my/history.php> [Accessed 8 May 2019].
4. Dictionary.cambridge.org. (2019). AWARENESS | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary. [Internet]Available from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/awareness>[cited 2 May 2019].
5. Agni P, Battin S. Awareness of Physiotherapy among General Practitioners: A Pilot Study. International Journal of Physiotherapy. 2017;4(4):253-61.
6. Paul A, Mullerpatan R. Review of Physiotherapy Awareness across the Globe. International Journal of Health Sciences and Research.2015;5(10):94-301.
7. Patel R. Awareness about Physiotherapy among High School Students of Anand District. International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Field.2015;1(5):1-5.
8. Agarwal Y, Agarwal M, Nalina G. Awareness of Physiotherapy among Higher Secondary Students and Perseverance among Physiotherapy students & Professionals in Meerut - A Survey. Indian Journal of Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy. 2012;6(1).
9. Thusharika D. Dissanayaka, Baneheka S. Awareness in Physiotherapy among High School Students. International Journal of Scientific Research Publications. 2014;4(7):5.
10. Harikrishnan R, Kamalambal H. Awareness and Attitude towards Physiotherapy among Higher Secondary Students: A Pilot Survey Study.

- International Journal of Physiotherapy Research. 2017;5(1):1846-185.
11. Ogiwara S, Nozoe M. Knowledge of Physiotherapy: A Study of Ishikawa High School Students. *Journal of Physical Therapy Science*. 2005;17(1):9-16.
 12. Varghese B, Rengaramanujam K, Swaminathan N, Vishal K, Romer M. Knowledge and perception of physiotherapy by final year students of various health care professions. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 2012;19(11):613-7.
 13. Shemjaz AM, Anuj T, Saddam MH. Awareness and Knowledge of Physical Therapy among Medical Interns a Pilot Study. *International Journal of Physiotherapy*. 2016;3(2).
 14. Abichandani D, Radia V. Awareness of Various Aspects of Physiotherapy among Medical Residents. *International Journal of Science and Research*. 2015;4(10):1460-5.
 15. Ijaz S, Furqan Ahmed S, Ullah MA. Awareness about the Role of Physical Therapy among Medical Practitioners Working in Burn Units. *Journal of Riphah College of Rehabilitation Science*. 2013;1(1):13-6.
 16. Einas S. Al-Eisa, Hind Al-Hoqail, Asma S. Al-Rushud, Al-Harhi A, Banan Al-Mass, Bashayer M. Al-Harbi, et al. Awareness, perceptions and beliefs about physiotherapy held by physicians working in Saudi Arabia: a cross-sectional study. *The Journal of Physical Therapy Science*. 2016;28(12):3435-9.
 17. Jayawardana RADWU, Fernando DAT, Priyadarshani WDMD, Lakmali PKGT, Jeewani NPN, Kumari WAKD, et al., editors. Evaluation of Awareness about Physiotherapy and Identification of the Most Vulnerable Region to Injury among School Level Male Hockey Players in Kandy Educational Zone. *proceedings of the Peradeniya University Research Sessions*; 2011 24, November 2011; Sri Lanka.
 18. Sajan M. Awareness of Physiotherapy Interventions among Pregnant Females in Antenatal Clinics, Buffalo city Municipality, Eastren Cape, South Africa. Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa: University of the Western Cape; 2013.
 19. Johnsey T, Swaminathan N, Vishal K, Rebello S. Awareness of physiotherapy among the Anganwadi workers in Dakshina Kannada: A survey. *Muller Journal of Medical Sciences and Research*. 2013;4(2):57.
 20. Rathod V, Naik V, Patel H, Gandh M. Physiotherapy Awareness in Primary School Teachers- Cross Sectional Survey. *International Journal of Recent Scientific Research*. 2018;9(2(E)):24073-7.
 21. Igwesi-Chidobe C. Obstacles to obtaining optimal physiotherapy services in a rural community in southeastern Nigeria. *Rehabil Res Pract*. 2012;PubMed PMID: 22973517;
 22. Sheppard L. Public perception of physiotherapy: implications for marketing. *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy*. 1994;40(4):265-71.
 23. Doshi D, Jiandani M, Gadgil R, Shetty N. Physiotherapy Awareness in Medical and Non Medical Population: A Social Media Survey. *International Journal of Physiotherapy and Research*. 2017;5(2):1971-5.
 24. Rognlie K, Searis Y. Public Perception of Physical Therapist Scope of Practice. *Journal of Student Physical Therapy Research*. 2011;4(1):10-7.
 25. Prati V, Liu H. Perceptions of College Students Regarding the Current Physical Therapy Profession and Professional Education Process. *The Internet Journal of Allied Health Sciences and Practice*. 2006;4(4):1-6.
 26. Dictionary.cambridge.org. MASSEUR | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary. [internet] Available from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/masseur> [Accessed 6 May 2019].
 27. chartered society of physiotherapy. (2019). What is physiotherapy?[Internet] Available from: <https://www.csp.org.uk/careers-jobs/what-is-physiotherapy>[Accessed 5 May 2019].
 28. NCCIH. (n.d.). Acupuncture: In Depth. [online] Available from: <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/acupuncture/introduction>[Accessed 15 May 2019].
 29. Thich Nhat Hannh. Quotable Quote: goodreads.com;[cited 2019].
 30. The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. (2019). Survey shows major boost in awareness of Physiotherapy. [Internet] Available from: <https://www.csp.org.uk/frontline/article/survey-shows-major-boost-awareness-physiotherapy> [Accessed 5 May 2019].
 31. Wcpt.org. (2019). World Physical Therapy Day | World Confederation for Physical Therapy. [online] Available at: <https://www.wcpt.org/wptday> [Accessed 5 May 2019].

32. Physiotherapy.ca. (2019). REP 18 - Celebrating the Profession, Educating the Public | Canadian Physiotherapy Association. [Internet] Available from: <https://physiotherapy.ca/blog/rep-18-celebrating-the-profession-educating-the-public> [Accessed 6 May 2019].
33. Australian.physio. (2019). APA | Choose Physio[Internet] Available from: <https://australian.physio/campaign/choosephysio>[Accessed 6 Jun. 2019].
34. Malaysian physiotherapy association. (2019). MPA mission-vision. [Internet] Available at: <https://www.mpa.net.my/Mission-vision.php>[Accessed 6 May 2019].
35. Zakaria AR, Baharu H, Hasim Z. Prospect of Physiotherapy Profession and requirements for Changes in High School Curriculum. *Current Advances in Education Research*. 2014;1(2):65-70.