

Consultant's Level of Interaction and Referral to Physical Therapist

Muhammad HaiderUllah Khan¹, Ashfaq Ahmad², Syed Ijaz Ahmed Burq³, Syed Amir Gilani⁴, Muhammad Abdullah Khan⁵

^{1,2,4,5}University of Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan,

³Lahore General Hospital, Lahore, Pakistan

ABSTRACT: The main objective of this study was to investigate the consultant's level of interaction and referral to physical therapist. A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted on the consultants of different health care facilities located in Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. Descriptive statistics were applied. Results revealed that out of two sixty five participants that were recruited for this study, 83.8% of the participants had interacted with physical therapist in their life time. While 16.2% revealed that they never interacted with physical therapist. 94.3% of the participants referred patients to the physical therapist. While 5.7% didn't refer at all. This study concluded that there is high interaction and referral rate among different specialties of consultants.

Key words: consultants, interaction, physical therapist, referral



1. Introduction:

Physical therapists provide health services, and

they recover, maintain, and develop movement, daily living activities and health of people in all age groups.

In some part of the world, they are called as physical therapists and in other part as physiotherapists. ¹

World Confederation of Physical Therapy (WCPT) takes physical therapy as, amenities to individuals to maintain and recover maximum activity and functional capability throughout their life². Physical therapists considered as helpful and important team

members within primary health care (PHC) teams.

Physical therapists are specialist in the field of musculoskeletal health by integrating them into PHC team, could improve case load management³. It is important to ensure that physical therapists, general practitioners and the wider public are informed about the potential benefits linked with the self-referral system⁴. An important part of their role is to work in coordination with other members of health team as a health care provider⁵. Physical therapy is the fifth major established health profession, and uses typical non pharmacological and non-invasive approach⁶.

Physical therapists could be striking health therapist

on their own or as collaborators of health therapy started by other healthcare group associates⁷. Physical therapists can add towards reducing unsafe behaviors by adding health edification in practice⁸. Physical therapists can perform a crucial part in endorsing wellness and fitness by boosting energetic life style⁹. Physical therapists are influential exercise prescribers and exercise instruction is considered as an important way to enforce health¹⁰. It's established through Ontario study that general family physicians identify physical therapist to improve chronic illness handling approaches by advising exercises and educating about health¹¹. In the modern era, physical therapist needs effective skills and abilities in numerous changes in patient's health attitude. These proficiencies certification should reflect in skilled practice, research and learning⁵. In current era, physical therapists have an integral part to perform. To contribute to the outcomes a well-established interaction and association between medical practitioners and physical therapist is required and need of an hour⁶. Physical therapists due to type of their work occasionally see patients over prolonged time duration and for prolonged visits. Therefore, they can play an important part in health promotion such as smoking cessation by advising and supporting their patients^{12, 13}. The profession of a physical therapist is an important part of a modern and high quality health care system. ¹⁴. After qualification, physical therapists in the United Kingdom are legally and professionally allowed to work with full autonomy¹⁵. It is expected that graduates, after completing their education programs, have exceptional communication abilities and competent as distinct benefactors of patient handling,

as accomplices in the wider practice and physical therapy profession, and as experts of health care who ought to have duties towards improvement of the society health¹⁶. Holdsworth et al in 2008 conducted a study to evaluate the opinion of general practitioners regarding the scope of physical therapy practice. They concluded that those general physicians who were at least involved with physical therapists for 3 years have reported high percentage (70%) of comfort level in working with physical therapists. This could be due to direct significance of their knowledge regarding the physical therapists, centered on long-term contact and the professional nature of their shared relationships¹⁵. Shimpi et al in 2014 concluded that there is a significant awareness about physical therapy and various functions of physical therapy including a high number of informed references sent for physical therapy. All the included doctors responded to the questionnaire had idea regarding scope of physical therapy and 95.9% (188 out of 196) did refer their patients¹⁷. Paz-Lourido and M.E. Kuisma conducted a study in Majorca, the Balearic Islands (Spain) and concluded that the awareness regarding inadequate knowledge about physical therapy and its influence on management of patients was not transmuted into a shared practice until we didn't make struggle at personal level. There is urgent need of suitable infrastructure along with the background knowledge about the physical therapy profession to make sure the cooperation among health professions and incorporating it into practice¹⁸. There were some studies available that assess the referral rate among doctors but interaction and referral level among consultants were never assessed.

Aims and objectives of the study: Aims and objectives of the study are to investigate the consultant's level of interaction and referral to physical therapist, and providing baseline for further researches.

Significance: This study targets to ascertain consultant's view regarding scope of physical therapy in light of interaction and referral level. This study also helps in to assess the awareness of physical therapy. The conclusion of this study would highlight consultant's level of interaction and referral to physical therapist.

2. Methodology:

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted using non probability convenient sampling procedure to collect data from consultants. Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Consultants working at different health care facilities of Lahore were approached at the place of their work. After explanation of the objectives of research a written consent was taken from each participant. All subjects were instructed to refrain from writing or recording any personal identifying information on the survey so that their anonymity could be protected. This included their name or home address. The self-designed questionnaire had three (3) sections; section A: contained information about demographic data such as: age, sex, specialty, designation B: included information about working experience, interaction with physical therapists, referral for physical therapy and awareness regarding physical therapy education programs section C: included information about the perception of, physical therapy role in patient

management and in health promotion. Sample size for the study calculated was 250. Total 450 questionnaires distributed with the goal to achieve sample size of 250. 308 questionnaires were returned. After scrutiny, 265 questionnaires fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Consultants having specialization with at least 5 years of experience or more and registered with Pakistan Medical and Dental Council fall in inclusion criteria. Collected data was entered and analyzed on statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 21. Relevant descriptive statistics were taken out depending on the type of variable under the study.

3. Results:

Of the total 450 questionnaires distributed, 308 questionnaires were returned. After scrutiny 265 questionnaires fulfill the inclusion criteria.

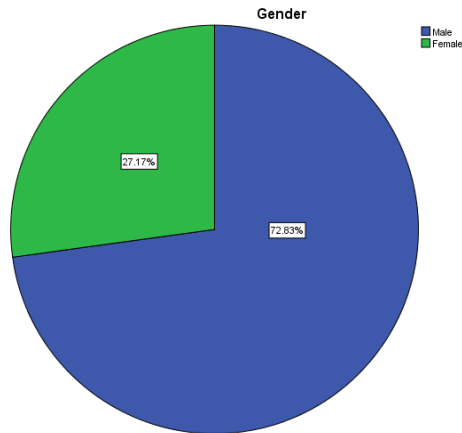
Descriptive Statistics:

Age of consultants:

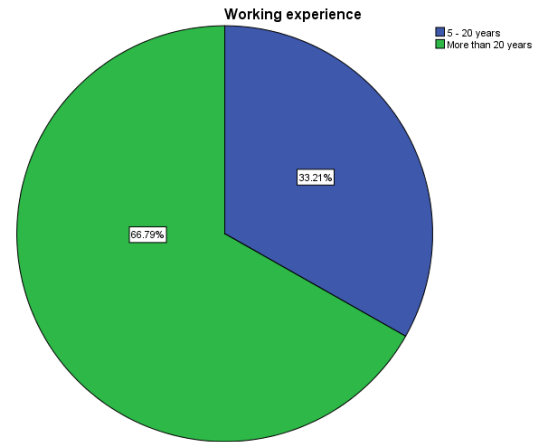
| Age | |
|----------------|-------|
| Mean | 49.06 |
| Std. Deviation | 6.880 |
| Minimum | 34 |
| Maximum | 62 |

Above table showed that minimum and maximum age of the participants were 34 and 62 respectively with a mean \pm SD 49.06 ± 6.880 .

Gender of consultants:

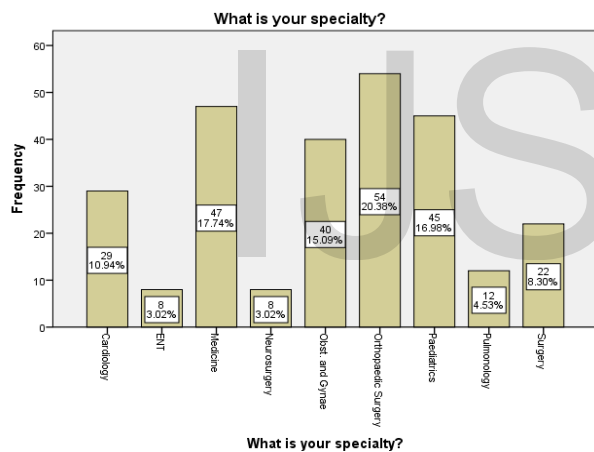


Above figure revealed that majority of the respondents for this study are male with a percentage of 72.8% (n=193) and female 26.7% (n=72).



Above figure showed the working experience of consultants. Majority of the subjects had more than 20 years working experience with percentage of 66.8 (f=177). 5-20 years' experience participants were 33.2% (f= 88).

Specialty of consultants:



Above figure showed that participants belong to nine (9) different specialties. Majorly participants belong to the orthopaedic specialty (20.4%), medicine (17.7%), paediatrics (17.0%) and obst. and gynae (15.1%). While other specialties participants were cardiology (10.9%), surgery (8.3%), pulmonology (4.5%), neurosurgery (3.0%) and ENT (3.0%).

Working experience of consultants:

Interaction with physical therapist:

| Have you ever had an interaction with physical therapist? | | |
|---|-----------|---------|
| | Frequency | Percent |
| Yes | 222 | 83.8 |
| No | 43 | 16.2 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 |

Above table revealed that 83.8% of the participants had interacted with physical therapist in their life time. While 16.2% revealed that they never interacted with physical therapist.

Refer a patient to physical therapist:

| Have you ever refer a patient to physical therapist? | | |
|--|-----------|---------|
| | Frequency | Percent |
| Yes | 250 | 94.3 |
| No | 15 | 5.7 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 |

Above table revealed that, 94.3% of the participants referred patients to the physical therapist. While 5.7% didn't refer at all.

5. Discussion:

This study collectively found that there is high interaction and referral rate among different specialties of consultants. As participants were experienced practitioners with not less than experience of 5 years. This may contribute to the high referral rate because of long term relationship as both being part of health care team. These interactions and referrals eventually result and may produce high level of cooperation between consultants and physical therapists. This cooperation could be because of increased level of confidence and comfort; and because of long term relationship. Similar findings are found in study conducted by Holdsworth et al in 2008. They concluded that those general physicians who were at least involved with physical therapists for 3 years have reported high percentage (70%) of comfort level in working with physical therapists. This could be due to direct significance of their knowledge regarding the physical therapists, centered on long-term contact and the professional nature of their shared relationships¹⁵. Similarly, Shimpi et al in 2014 found that doctors had idea regarding scope of physical therapy and 95.9% (188 out of 196) did refer their patients¹⁷. As described by Quartey et al that medical referrals for the physical therapy reflects the awareness level among health care professionals¹⁹. In the study done by Sheppard, she concluded that an increase in communication between the doctors and physical therapists indirectly creates an increased awareness within the public²⁰.

6. Conclusion:

This study concluded that majority of the consultants had interacted with physical therapists in their life time and had refer patients to the physical therapist. Because of consultant's interaction and referral of patient to physical therapist, this study also points out that there was awareness regarding the scope of physical therapy.

6. References

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