

# Evaluation of Current Lifestyle Habits of Physical Therapists

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**Abstract— Objective:** To analyze the current lifestyle habits and help determine changes necessary for future health and wellness. **Methodology:** This cross sectional study was conducted in different clinics and physical therapy departments of hospitals situated in Karachi city from Jan 2013 to June 2013. Convenience non probability sampling technique was used to select the participants for this study. A validated and modified questionnaire was used to explore the lifestyle habits of physical therapists. The participants for this study were all physical therapists working in different areas of Karachi city. Those physical therapists that filled the inclusion criteria were selected for the study. 100 validated and modified questionnaires along with introductory letter were sent out to the participants. Questionnaires used in this study contained closed ended questions which were analyzed by quantitative methods. After analysis data were presented in the form of tables and figures. **Results:** in aerobic activities, strength training and flexibility exercises often and also maintain their recommended body weight. Majority of physical therapists more often ate a well-balanced diet and limit the amount of fat and saturated fat, but less frequently ate fast food. The study results also revealed that most of the physical therapists were avoiding chemical dependency i.e. use of tobacco and alcohol, addictive drugs etc. They were also playing a vital role in disease prevention and stress management. **Conclusions:** This study identified that physical therapists maintain their health related fitness often but not always. They often used to take care of their nutrition habits as well. Along with their personal hygiene and health they are also taking care of environmental health and protection. They can cope up with the stress by effective stress management techniques. Physical therapists exhibit both positive and negative health behaviors which differ in domains at different points of their life.

**Index Terms—** Current lifestyle Habits, Health Related Fitness, Nutrition, Health, Wellness, Physical Therapist

## 1 INTRODUCTION

A healthy lifestyle is the outcome of being fit and well. One who will follow the recommendations of being fit and well will automatically adopt a healthy lifestyle. [1]

Daily exercises and adequate sleep, and balancing the demands of work will help to offer a healthy lifestyle. [1]

The essential components found in a healthy life style are mostly related with:

- Family customs
- Health edification
- Likeable profession
- Safe surroundings/atmosphere
- Plenty of nutrition
- Activities of fitness
- Avoidance of bad behavior
- Personal hygiene
- Kindheartedness and love
- Positive social communication. [1]

If we go through the components and needs for a healthy lifestyle we will definitely come to know that the healthy lifestyle and wellness and fitness somehow somewhere are interrelated with each other. Like in a healthy life style traditions and family relations are of due importance, yet if go in flashback that we have discussed in the components of wellness the importance of emotional and social wellness. Here we got to know that both are complimenting each other. Presence of social and emotional wellness will results in good family as well as social relations and that will build up a healthy lifestyle of an individual. This was just the one example. [2]

If we consider the positive image of ourselves from the components of the healthy lifestyle and then think about the intellectual wellness we will again find out that these two are also interrelated with each other. Therefore one with intellectual

wellness can have a positive image of his own selves and have a direction I life and this again enable him to pertain a healthy lifestyle. [2]

If we have a look upon our physical therapists, we will definitely get to know that what lacking is present in the physical therapists of our society. Let us consider a general routine of a physical therapist of our society.

What is being observed is, a young physical therapist have so much craze for his profession. He is new to the field. Now what he uses to do is in spite of taking care of himself, he took many of the home visits and clinical practices as well. During the home visits it is natural that the physical therapist will not be facilitated with the required equipments. What he uses to do is to manage in the conditions without taking care of him. The working conditions are very uncomfortable for him but still he use to give service there. This actually benefits somehow the patient but have adverse effect upon the health of the therapist.

Similarly in the OPD's it has been a common observation that there is bulk of patients lined up. The physical therapist has the ability to treat some percent of it in a while but what he uses to do is that again he does not care for himself, and serve the patients. Their diet is disturbed due to this hectic schedule. Also in the treatment in unfavorable or uncomfortable conditions there body is also badly affected. That is the reason why risk factors are commonly seen in the physical therapists.

In many cases it is also observed that the physical therapists of our society have joined the academic grounds and clinical grounds together. What there schedule is they use to teach in the morning while they continue their home visits and clinical practices in the evening and night. Because of this they don't have even a single minute to think about themselves. [3]

Mostly these types of practices are found in those physical therapists who don't have the awareness that their health also count. Their job is to facilitate the patient but they have to care for themselves as well so that the outcome on the patient and the outcome of their life will also be good. [3]

If we conclude, so the summarized lifestyle of the physical therapist as observed come out to be:

- No time for themselves
- Inadequate sleep and rest
- Adaptation of wrong working conditions and posture
- Carelessness of their health
- Low fitness and wellness levels
- Spoil themselves in serving others [3], [4]

In short the lifestyle of our therapist is not up to the mark and it has to be corrected. But the question is how come they will correct their lifestyle, so that they would not only benefit their patients but be a source of benefit for themselves as well.

Before we start the discussion that how our physical therapist can achieve the highest level of well being, we should now that what is actually the height of well being.

Well-being is having the best quality of life, where one is proper fit and well and lives a healthy lifestyle. When all the components of wellness are appreciated in one's life and if they play an important role to improve his quality of life so this will be called well-being. [4], [5]

Well being can prevent many diseases and disorders in a person while leading him towards a healthy life. Risk factors are also inhibited by well being. [4], [5]

What will be the steps to get this highest level of well being for a physical therapist? It is so easy for a physical therapist to perceive that. To get to this a physical therapist can take help of his profession as well. That is use of exercises and therapies to correct their lifestyle. The basic steps which a physical therapist must take in order to achieve his goal of highest well being should be:

- A basic fitness program for himself
- Activating his sedentary lifestyle
- Adopt appropriate working conditions. [4], [6]

## 2 MATERIAL AND METHODS

100 physical therapists working in different clinics and physical therapy departments of hospitals situated in Karachi city were selected for this study. The participants for this study were selected randomly through the Pakistan Physical Therapy Association database by the convenient non probability sampling technique. The duration of the study was six months from Jan 2013 to June 2013.

Participants were asked to complete the validated and mod-

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ified questionnaire and returned to the researcher or the person who gave it to them after one week of time. The targeted population of this study was both gender have age range 25 to 55 years and working in different clinics or physical therapy departments of hospitals. Physical therapy students, physical therapists working in academics and who are not currently practicing were excluded from the study. All the questionnaires were delivered in person to the participants along with the introductory letter for participants' convenience.

introductory letter included introduction of researcher, aims of study, and details of data collection and how participants were selected and approached. All the responses were collected in person by the researcher. Initially all responses were coded with a unified coding system and data were entered in to the SPSS 20 according to the unified coding to assure participants anonymity. Each question was coded according to the number of options and a unique code was used for each option of the closed questions. Data analyzed by using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Descriptive statistics; frequency and percentage were used for analysis. Data was summarized and reported in the aggregate.

## 3 RESULTS

100 questionnaires were sent out and 100 physiotherapists gave their responses to this questionnaire survey. There were 59 female and 41 male. Majority of the participants belonged to an age group whose ages were within 25 years. The results of the study revealed that with respect to health related fitness 16% participants were always up to it. 43.25% participants were only involved in these activities often and 40.75% participants didn't care about it. Regarding nutritional habits 29% people took better care of their nutrition, 48.66 did it often, while 22.33 participants said that they don't even keep track of it. 69.2% participants always avoided chemical dependency. 13.6% participants often did it while the rest 17.2% never avoided chemical dependency. 33.75% participants did focus on stress management. 52.5% participants often managed stress while 17.2% never even cared about it. 52.75% participants managed personal health and hygiene. 33% often did it and the rest 14.25 didn't care about personal health or hygiene. Disease prevention measures were taken by 28.25% people. 35.75 took these measures often and the rest 25.5 didn't take these measures at all. 59.75 focused on doing activities for emotional well-being. 25.5 did it often while 14.75 never did it. 61.5% participants took measures for personal safety. 24% often did activities for that and 14.5% never did these activities. Environmental health and protection was taken into consideration by 56.5% participants totally. 31.5% did it often and 12% never focused on it.

TABLE I  
LIFESTYLE HABITS OF PHYSICAL THERAPIST

S. No	Habits	Always (%)	Often (%)	Never (%)
1	Health Related Fitness	16	43.25	40.75
2	Nutrition	29	48.66	22.33
3	Avoiding Chemical Dependency	69.2	13.6	17.2
4	Stress Management	33.75	52.5	13.75
5	Personal Hygiene / Health	52.75	33	14.25
6	Disease Prevention	38.25	35.75	25.5
7	Emotional Well-Being	59.75	25.5	14.75
8	Personal Safety	61.5	24	14.5
9	Environmental Health And Protection	56.5	31.5	12

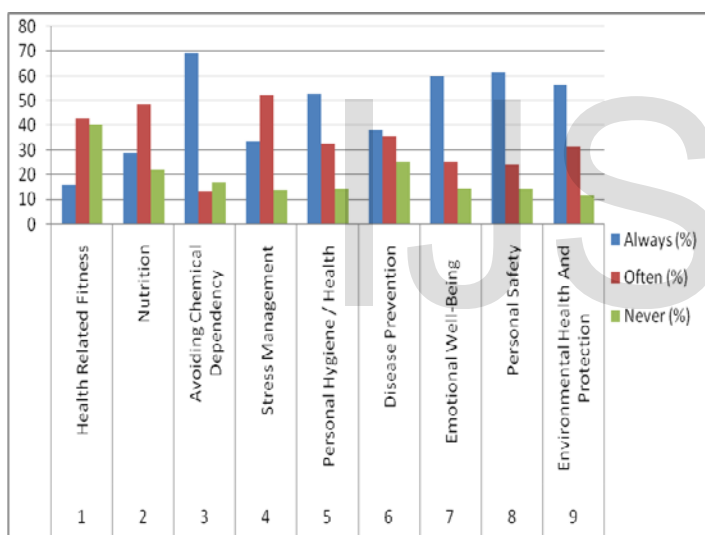


Fig I. Lifestyle Habits of Physical Therapists

## 4 DISCUSSION

This study provides us very important information about the lifestyle habits of the physical therapists of Karachi city. There was an acceptable response rate to this validated and modified questionnaire. Number of authors all over the world investigated the life style habits of different health care providers and general population. They investigated and included different factors. Some of them are KadriSuija et al in 2010, conducted a very important study and did a literature review for the Estonian family doctors physical activity and counseling for a healthy lifestyle. [7]

Jessica J. Groth, et al in 2008 has reported the health and fitness of certified athletic trainers. They reported that now

physical activity has broadly been accepted by everyone. People have accepted that physical activity plays a very important role in preventing chronic diseases. They have reported that when moderate intensity physical activity test were performed they resulted that Athletic trainers (ATs) were more physically active than general population. [8]

Similarly in our study, on physical therapists (PTs), have great emphasis upon the physical activity. Few of the PTs of Karachi tend to do less physical activity regularly but majority don't do it at all or if some does it they do it often but not on regular bases. The physical therapists who do physical activity they mostly do strength training or flexibility exercises.

In the study of Roczniki Painstrowego and Zakludu Higieny about Evaluation of the lifestyle of students of physiotherapy and technical and computer science basing on their diet and physical activity. They found out that the dietary habits of these students were not up to the mark. Meals having poor nutrient content were consumed by these students. In our study, the results were a little different from their findings. 77.66% participants did take care of their nutrition and the rest did not. The percentage of positive response is pretty good. [9] The authors also mentioned some health related fitness activities like strolling, cycling and swimming sports and that the physical therapy students were more active in these things rather than computer science people. Our study had results that were a little opposite to their findings. Only 16% were more devoted to health related fitness, while the rest of them did it sometimes.

Gary S. Goldfield et al study on the effects of modifying Physical Activity and sedentary behavior on psychosocial adjustment in overweight/obese children brought forward some serious issues like obesity and being over-weighted. He talked a little about how physical self worth or personal health can be enhanced in children. Our study also showed that more than half of the therapists did consider personal health and took measures related to that. [10]

Mark S Tremblay, et al study on Systematic review of sedentary behavior and health indicators in school-aged children and youth brought forward the point that the sedentary behaviors of these children increased risks of diseases and psychological problems. Our study showed that the behavior of physiotherapists was favorable for diseases, however, 38.25 said that they keep their behavior strictly non-favorable for diseases, 35.75% said that they don't strictly go for such measures while the rest said that they do not care about it. [11]

Joanna Suliburska et al pointed out some things in her study on an analysis of lifestyle of young adults in the rural and urban areas that the fondness of sweet dishes and junk food lead to increase in weight. Also it pointed out that people living in rural areas have more positive attitude towards lifestyle. Their high physical activity levels lead to less stress. Our study showed that 33.75% people manage their stress properly. 52.5% do it more often and 13.75 were not involved in activities that led to less stress. [12]

Stacy L. Butt et al studied on lifestyle behavior of the physical therapists and student physical therapists and pointed out that

the physical therapy students had less emotional well-being because of the stress. However, physical therapists did not suffer through any kind of lack of emotional well-being. Out results regarding this showed that 59.75% of the physical therapists didn't have to go through any kind of lack of emotional well-being. 25.5% said that they often tried to be healthy emotionally while the rest of them were not well emotionally and the percentage of such therapists was 14.75% which is quite low. [13]

## 5 CONCLUSION

The physiotherapists focused mostly on avoiding chemical dependency however emotional well being and hygiene were also their priorities. Health related fitness and nutrition were least of their priorities. If we look at these aspects, then these two are actually what are most important for the body. Physiotherapists must take out time for themselves as well. This will help them in managing everything in a constructive manner and would be able to make their personal and professional lives much better.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Deeper insight of issues related to physical therapists lifestyle can be achieved by conducting interviews and by observing physiotherapists in their clinical settings. Selection of participants from across Pakistan will also help in better understanding and evaluation of significance of physiotherapists' lifestyle habits.

It is the primary responsibility of physical therapists to promote healthy living and behavior in their patients. As they are the role models, so, it is of immense important that they themselves should exhibit positive health behavior and healthy lifestyle.

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