



## Original Article

## Awareness, Belief, Attitude and Utilization of Physiotherapy Services among Doctors

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## ABSTRACT

Physiotherapy has come to be recognized as a well-known form of medical care that reduces patients' dependency and level of disability. Physiotherapists play an important part in community rehabilitation and health education because of the role physiotherapy plays in reducing the incidence and severity of disability. **Objectives:** To determine about the awareness of belief and attitude towards the utilization of physiotherapy services and interventions among doctors in selected hospitals of Lahore. **Methods:** The study design was Descriptive cross sectional. Total 150 doctors participated in this research from Arif Memorial Hospital, Mayo Hospital, Farooq Hospital and Ghurki Hospital. **Results:** There were 134 MBBS doctors and 16 FCPS doctors aged between 25 to 40 years and having 2 to 10 years of clinical experience. 58% of the study population were female doctors while 42% were male doctors. According to the study, medical doctors' perceptions regarding the profession of physiotherapy were moderately negative. This analysis also revealed some significant elements that might have had a negative impact on the degree of usage of physiotherapy treatments. **Conclusions:** Overall, this study showed that clinical doctors' attitudes toward the physiotherapy profession were generally negative. Some important potential factors were also identified that might have had a negative impact or limited the extent to which physiotherapy services were utilized in Lahore, Pakistan.

## INTRODUCTION

Physiotherapy has come to be recognized as a well-known form of medical care that reduces patients' dependency and level of disability. In any event, multidisciplinary health care structures nevertheless have a demand for its acknowledgment. In recent years, physiotherapy (PT) has gained popularity as a form of medicine, and the field is expanding quickly overall, especially in developing nations. Physical therapists are crucial health care professionals that assess and treat patients of all ages, according to the USA Department of Labor. Cardiovascular and pulmonary, orthopedic, neurologic, sports, and other sub-specialties of physical therapy have been identified, and they treat a variety of patients to reduce dependency and handicap [1]. Rather than focusing on healing patients, the current worldwide paradigm for health care systems emphasizes preventing sickness. Physiotherapists play an important

part in community rehabilitation and health education because of the role physiotherapy plays in reducing the incidence and severity of disability. Therefore, physiotherapy should be a crucial component of disability management and prevention programs [2]. Despite physical therapy's widespread acceptance and rapid expansion, few Lahore, Pakistan-based clinicians are aware of or make use of it. There's a huge variety of specializations in the health care industry. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to value, acknowledge, and comprehend the skills and abilities of other coworkers who are able to provide long-term patient care. Therefore, it is crucial for doctors to be aware of the role physiotherapy plays in maintaining an individual's functional capacity [3]. A study of Saudi Arabian physicians found that physiotherapists were able to correctly diagnose their

patients and safely manage them in the emergency room. This is a promising finding that bolsters the case for sending physiotherapists with the necessary level of experience and training to emergency rooms [4]. It is hoped that innovative approaches to healthcare delivery would increase patient access and quality of life for this group. Physiotherapists, for example, are expected to play increasingly important roles as key care providers for the treatment of MSK diseases because of their expertise in the diagnosis and management of a wide range of these conditions [5]. It is generally agreed that the underutilized field of physiotherapy might benefit from more early referrals and acknowledgement from medical experts and public awareness [6]. Modern youth have the convenience of technology at their fingertips, but the most trustworthy sources for career information and counselling are health fairs and seminars. When time is of the essence, the internet is your best bet. Since these organizations contain highly trained professionals, it is crucial that they play a greater role in promoting physiotherapy [7]. Future physicians, faced with a dearth of time to devote to lifestyle counselling in primary care settings, will do well to expand their awareness to include the services of other health experts, such as physiotherapists, who can provide more in-depth advice on physical exercise [8]. Family doctors should have a firm grasp on the possible benefits and advantages of physiotherapy in order for them to recommend it as a treatment option for musculoskeletal injuries and disorders [9]. There is still a lack of effective comprehension of physical therapist practice in the emergency room setting. Despite the fact that this method has been in use for at least 15 years in the United States, there are few written accounts of the advantages of this method. U.S. doctors have a favorable opinion of physical therapists working in the emergency department (ED), and they see them as an important part of the interdisciplinary team that treats patients in a medical emergency [10]. In Pakistan, there are a rising number of disabilities, which increase the financial burden for people and as well as for the government. There is an increasing life expectancy with many more incidences of chronic diseases. What's more, there is an increase in motor vehicle accidents and other horrendous mishaps. The entirety of the above prompts the requirement for an expanded and better educated health workforce both in the urban communities and in the rustic and far off zones of our nation. As of now there is less awareness among medical doctors and government agencies, especially about the role and utilization of physiotherapy in the health care framework [11]. Over the years, the field of physiotherapy has evolved from providing broad categories of physical therapy to offering specialized services in healthcare facilities.

Despite physiotherapy's widespread recognition and recent developments, very little study has been conducted in Pakistan to gauge the field's profile among the country's medical professionals. So that physical therapy is improved and used generally with the required knowledge and concern, it is crucial to raise medical residents' awareness of the job of a physiotherapist [12]. There is, in fact, a dearth of thorough understanding of the Physiotherapy profession even among medical specialists in high and high HDI countries. Common misconceptions about the field include that it has nothing to do with health or medicine and instead focuses solely on massage and fitness. In order to raise medical professionals' understanding of their field's role in the larger health care system, widespread promotion of the profession is urgently needed [13]. According to research done in Saudi Arabia, the vast majority of respondents working in government and military hospitals reported never referring patients to PT departments [14]. If other doctors don't understand the physical therapist's unique perspective, it will be difficult for their patients to get the care they need, which is where physiotherapists come in. At the same time, it is vital to analyze the current attitude, belief, and understanding on the part of medical professionals and medical students regarding physiotherapy if efforts are to be put up to increase the degree of awareness of physical therapy. This study used a questionnaire to assess the present state of knowledge, belief, attitude, and awareness of physical therapy services among medical professionals [1].

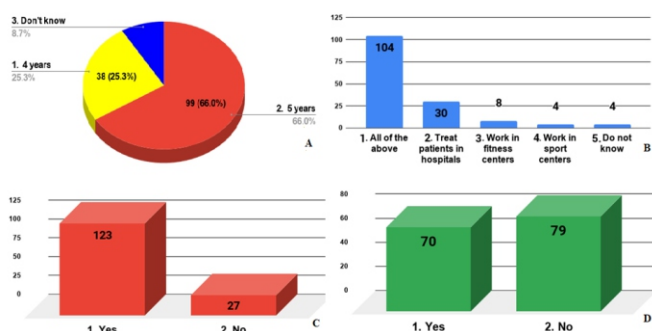
## METHODS

This research used a descriptive cross-sectional study design as its study methodology. A total of 150 medical professionals from Arif Memorial Hospital, Mayo Hospital, Farooq Hospital, and Ghurki Hospital took part in this study. The questionnaire that was utilized to gather the data was based on studies done in Sri Lanka, India and two other nations [15-17]. Non-probability convenience sampling was used. There were 150 practicing doctors, men and women between the ages of 25 and 40, with experience ranging from 2 to 10 years. 16 FCPS doctors and 134 MBBS doctors each took part in this study. The mean, standard deviation, range, and histogram were used to present the quantitative variables. Categorical variables were analyzed using cross tabulation, frequency, percentages (%), bar charts, and pie charts.

## RESULTS

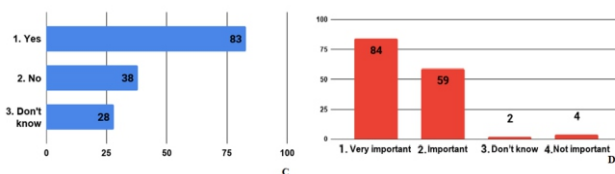
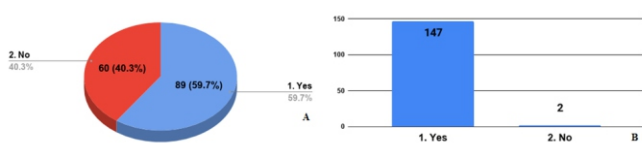
The graphic illustrations in Figure 1A represents awareness regarding the level of medical doctors regarding physiotherapy. The present study found that 99(66%) doctors who participated in the research knew that DPT is 5 years' program, 38(25.3%) said that it is 4 years' program

and 13 (8.7%) doctors were unaware about the total course years of DPT. According to the research results, 104(69.3%) doctors think that Physiotherapists treat patients in hospitals, work in fitness & sports centers as well. 30(20%) doctors think that they just treat patients in hospitals. 8(5.33%) doctors think that they only work in fitness centers. 4(2.66%) doctors think that Physiotherapists work in sports centers and 4(2.66%) doctors do not know exactly (Figure 1B). 123(82%) doctors think that they need to know more about physiotherapy and 27(18%) think that they don't need to know more about physiotherapy in Lahore hospitals (Figure 1C). We found out that 70 doctors (46.67%) believed their present knowledge on physiotherapy was adequate to counsel a patient in need of physiotherapy, there were 79 doctors (52.67%) who believed their current knowledge is NOT adequate to advise a patient in need of physiotherapy (Figure 1D).



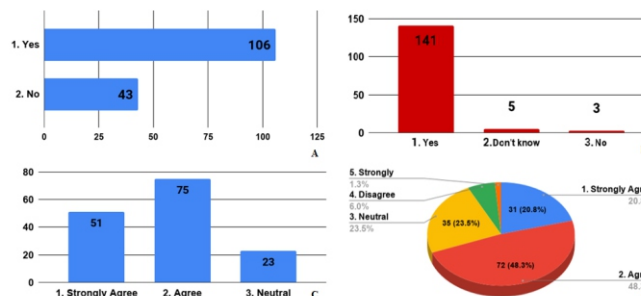
**Figure 1:** A) How many years of course is DPT. B) Do you know what physiotherapists do. C) Do you think you need to know more about physiotherapy. D) Your current awareness on physiotherapy is sufficient to refer a patient to physiotherapist

The graphic illustrations in Figure 2A represents belief of medical doctors regarding Physiotherapy. 89 (59.7%) physicians think that physiotherapists are able to diagnose and treat patients who seek their services, whereas 60 (40.3%) disagree. 147 (98%) doctors think that physiotherapists should be in all hospitals and only 2 (2%) doctors think that they should not be in all hospitals (Figure 2B). 83(55.3%) doctors think that physical therapy services are expensive, 38(25.3%) said that physical therapy services are NOT expensive while 28(18.6%) don't know about it (Figure 2C). 84(56%) doctor's perception of the place of physiotherapy in the health sector is very important, 59(39.3%) doctors said it is important, 4(2.67%) said it's not important, 2(1.3%) doctors don't know about it (Figure 2D).



**Figure 2:** A) Can physiotherapists make diagnosis and as well as treat patients. B) Do you think physiotherapists should be in all hospitals. C) Physical therapy services are expensive. D) What is your perception of physiotherapy in health sector

The graphic illustrations in Figure 3A depicts attitude of physiotherapy services among medical doctors. 70.6% said they would urge a family member to pursue a career in physiotherapy, while 28.6% said they would discourage such an endeavor. 141 physicians strongly believe that physical therapy plays a significant role in community-based rehabilitation, while just 3 disagree and 5 are unaware of this (Figure 3B). Fifty one medical professionals (34%) agree that physiotherapists are well qualified and can be relied upon to offer patients with care. 75 doctors (50%) agree with this assertion, with another 23 (15.3%) taking no stance (Figure 3C). 31(20.8%) doctors Strongly Agree with the statement that Physiotherapists can effectively reassess the patients for further investigations when necessary. 72 (48.3%) doctors agree with this statement. 35(23.5%) doctors have neutral opinion about it. 9 (6%) disagree with it while 2 (1.3%) strongly disagree with this statement (Figure 3D).



**Figure 3:** A) Would you like to encourage your relatives to be a physiotherapist B) Physical therapy plays an important role in Rehabilitation? C) Physiotherapists are well qualified to provide care to patients D) Physiotherapists can reassess the patients for further investigations.

The graphic illustrations are showing utilization of physiotherapy services among medical doctors. 52(34.6%) doctors strongly agree with the statement that Physiotherapy services has a vital role in secondary care .76 (50.67%) doctors agree with this statement. 16 (10.67%) doctors have neutral opinion about it. 3(2%) disagree with it while 2(1.3%) strongly disagree with this statement (Figure 4A). More than half of physicians, or 128 (85.3%), believe they know little to nothing about the range of physiotherapy services that can be provided in the course of patient care, while just 21(14.7%) are confident in their understanding of

this area (Figure 4B). 131 (87.3%) doctors said that they are confident enough to refer their patients to a physiotherapist while 19 (12.67%) said that they are NOT are confident enough to refer their patients to a physiotherapist (Figure 4C). 135 (90%) doctors said that they have Physical Therapy department in their hospital while 15 (10%) said that they don't have physical therapy department in their hospital (Figure 4D).

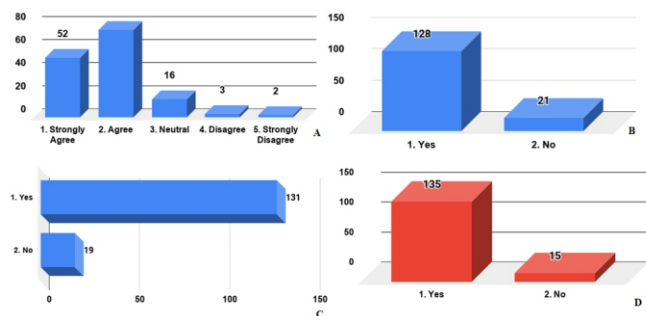


Figure 4: A) Physiotherapy services has a vital role in secondary care. B) Do you think you have limited knowledge regarding the types of physiotherapy services that can be provided in treatment of patient. C) Are you confident enough to refer your patients to a physiotherapist. D) Do you have physical therapy department in your hospital

## DISCUSSION

According to the study, medical doctors' perceptions regarding the profession of physiotherapy were moderately less as we have discussed the results with graphical illustrations. According to the research results, 74 (49.3%) doctors were aware about all the specializations after DPT i.e., Neurology, Sports, Pediatric, Cardiorespiratory, Geriatric, Manual therapy, Oncology, Women's health, Community PT, Functional dermatology and rest of the doctors 76 (50.67%) were not aware about all of the specializations. In 2014, researchers in India examined medical residents' awareness of many facets of the physiotherapy field, and they found that, like their American counterparts, Indian medical residents lacked adequate information about the physiotherapy curriculum [16]. According to the research results, 104 (69.3%) doctors think that Physiotherapists treat patients in hospitals, work in fitness & sports centers as well. 30 (20%) doctors think that they just treat patients in hospitals. 8 (5.33%) doctors think that they only work in fitness centers. 4 (2.66%) doctors think that Physiotherapists work in sports centers and 4 (2.66%) doctors do not know exactly. Research conducted in the United States suggests that physical therapists are becoming increasingly valuable in emergency departments, suggesting that we may want to adopt a policy that promotes direct triage of specific diseases to physical therapists in this context [17, 18]. We found out that 70 doctors (46.67%) believed their present

knowledge on physiotherapy was adequate to counsel a patient in need of physiotherapy, there were 79 doctors (52.67%) who believed their current knowledge is NOT adequate to advise a patient in need of physiotherapy. Research of relevance conducted in Saudi Arabia revealed a number of variables that may impede the widespread usage of physiotherapy services among physicians [19]. Recent findings indicate that only 43 (28.0%) medical professionals are well-versed in all treatment modalities, such as ultrasound, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, moist heat, wax bath, intermittent traction, short wave diathermy, muscle stimulator, cryotherapy, nerve conduction velocity, laser, interferential therapy, infrared and ultraviolet radiation, whole-body treadmill, electromyography biofeedback, continuous passive motion, suspension therapy, whirlpool while rest of them 107 (71.3%) medical practitioners were aware about some major modalities like TENS, Ultrasound and traction. Very few medical professionals (17.78%) in a 2016 Malaysian survey on physician knowledge and attitudes about physiotherapy identified bandages, tapes, and splints as part of the physiotherapy unit [20]. According to the research results, 58 (38.9%) doctors were aware about all the conditions mentioned in the question which can be treated by a physiotherapist which are Torticollis, Tennis elbow/ Golfer's elbow Burns, Scoliosis, Pre-operative condition, Post-operative condition, Fractures, Arthritis, Spinal cord injuries, Stroke, Shoulder pain, Cerebral palsy and Back Pain while 92 (61.3%) doctors were aware about just back pain, tennis elbow, shoulder pain and arthritis.

## CONCLUSIONS

Academics and clinicians in the field of physiotherapy should work to dispel doctors' misconceptions about their services by raising public knowledge. Physical Therapists are accountable for disseminating the latest evidence-based knowledge to their peers in the medical community and to the general public. Medical professionals should be encouraged to participate in formal training and education about physiotherapy.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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