

Awareness Of Role Of Physiotherapy In Palliative Care Among Working Healthcare Professionals: A Cross- Sectional Study

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Abstract:

Background: Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families who are facing problems associated with life-threatening illness. Physiotherapy in the palliative care should aim to enhance the patient's quality of life. A fundamental goal of palliative care is the relief of pain and other symptoms. Physiotherapists play an inherent role in the multidisciplinary palliative care team emphasizing on improving function and quality of life in patients who are deemed to require physical and functional dimensions of care.

Objective : To check the awareness regarding role of physiotherapy in palliative care among working healthcare professionals.

Materials and Methods: To conduct this observational study, subjects will be taken according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Prior to starting the study, the procedure must be explained and consent form will be taken from the subjects, survey-based investigation was carried out with the aid of a self-made, validated questionnaire.

Results: Among 97 working healthcare professionals (experience more than 6months) were collected for the study and analyzed. The results show that more than 50% working healthcare professionals in Jalgaon district are aware about role of physiotherapy in palliative care.

Conclusion: From this study, it appeared that there were relatively high number of working healthcare professionals with aware of role of physiotherapy in palliative care.

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I. Introduction

Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families who are facing problems associated with life-threatening illness.⁽¹⁾ Palliative care focusses on care like relieving pain, helping reduce breathlessness, supporting people through the anxiety of living with a serious condition, and making practical plans for the future.⁽²⁾ The goal for the physiotherapeutic treatment is to keep as much independency as possible to make the important activities for the patient easy. Physiotherapy in the palliative care should aim to enhance the patient's quality of life. A fundamental goal of palliative care is the relief of pain and other symptoms.⁽³⁾ Physiotherapists play an inherent role in the multidisciplinary palliative care team emphasizing on improving function and quality of life in patients who are deemed to require physical and functional dimensions of care.⁽⁷⁾ Physiotherapy aims to:

- Maintain optimum respiratory function
- Maintain optimum circulatory function
- Improves the patient's quality of life
- Improve functional independence
- Educate and participate in the care.⁽⁶⁾

Physical dimension was defined as one's experience of the physical discomfort associated with progressive illness for a perceived level of physical distress.⁽⁸⁾ Physical dimension in physiotherapy includes symptom control, management of physical findings such as mobility, strength, flexibility, endurance, deformity, co-ordination, balance, gait, breathing, exercise tolerance.⁽⁹⁾ Symptom control by physiotherapy is applicable in patients with commonest symptoms which require palliative care such as pain, weakness, cough and breathlessness.⁽¹⁰⁾ Physiotherapy techniques include therapeutic exercise, electrical modalities, thermal modalities, mechanical modalities and manual physiotherapy. In palliative care, the physiotherapist informs the patient about the therapy plan in the context of possible outcomes and explains the role of specific duties. Physiotherapy aims to improve the patient's level of physical function, and while the physiotherapist is aware of the patient's underlying pathological condition, it is not the primary focus of treatment. Physiotherapy intervention

focuses on the physical and functional consequences of the disease and its treatment on the patient. ⁽⁷⁾ The overall aim for physiotherapy in palliative care is to help the patient reach the best possible quality of life for the rest of the patient's life, to look after the physical as well as the psychological side for as long as possible. ⁽⁶⁾ The aim of study is to assess the awareness regarding role of physiotherapy in palliative care among working healthcare professionals.

II. Material And Methods

Materials:

- Online self-made Questionnaire to assess the awareness related to palliative care.
- Online consent by using google form

Method:

Study Design: An Observational study

Study Location: Jalgaon district

Study Duration: 6 months

Sample size: 97 working healthcare professionals

Sample size calculation: The sample size was calculated by the following formula.

$$n = \frac{Z^2pq}{d^2}$$

Subjects & selection method: The Criteria of selection of participants was done based on Inclusion Criteria which included the participants.

Inclusion criteria: Voluntarily willing working healthcare professionals having working experience of more than 6 months.

Exclusion criteria: not willing participants.

Procedure:

Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional ethical committee of prior to the commencement of study. The participants were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Participant were provided with information, consent form and detail procedure was explained to them. Then the participants were provided with the online questionnaire. Data were collected, statistically analysed and result were generated.

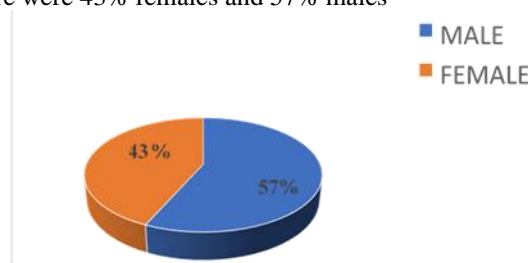
Statistical analysis:

Data were collected from participants and statistical analysis done. Survey results analysed using SPSS version 20 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) and then descriptive statics were obtained. Data were presented as frequency and percentage of response from the participants.

III. Result

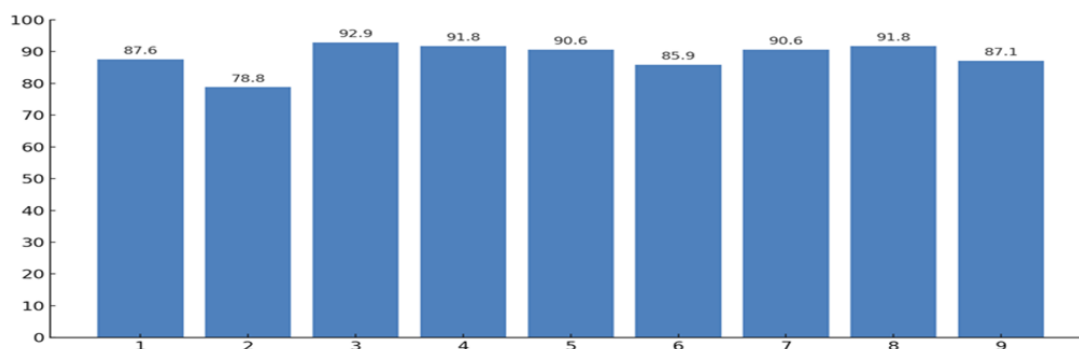
A total of 97 subjects were enrolled in the study. Data was collected on standardized self-made questionnaire and entered in MS Excel. Data was analyzed and results were obtained.

Among the participants, there were 43% females and 57% males



Question-wise percentage of right answers by participants:

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
% of Most appropriate options selected by the participant	87.6%	78.8%	92.9%	91.8%	90.6%	85.9%	90.6%	91.8%	87.1%



IV. Discussion

This survey-based study aimed to assess awareness of role of physiotherapy in palliative care among working healthcare professionals in Jalgaon district. In this survey there were 97 working healthcare professionals among which 57% are Male and 43% are Female participants. The participants were given a form which was a self-made questionnaire. The form has 9 item questionnaires. The data was obtained with the help questionnaire showed that 87.6% working healthcare professionals were aware about physiotherapy in palliative care. More than 50% of working healthcare professionals in this study was reported that the physiotherapy can be used for Assessment, Prognosis, Diagnosis, Intervention and Follow up. About 78.8% working healthcare professionals referred patients to physiotherapy in palliative care.

Inken Schwonke et al (2024) conducted a study on Feasibility of a physical exercise intervention for patients on a palliative care unit: a critical analysis concluded that despite the challenges that were faced in screening and testing process, that are specific to the palliative patient population with their unique therapeutic requirements and varying mental and physical capabilities, they discovered the 2-week exercise intervention to be feasible, safe, and well tolerated by palliative care patients. Moreover, it seems that short-term improvements in QoL and PF are possible. ⁽⁸⁾

A study conducted by Sonill S. Maharaj et al (2023) result indicate that 73.9% of the participants had sufficient knowledge about PC, 80.5% had a sufficient level of awareness about PC and 66.7% were using current clinical practices in the rehabilitation of critically ill patients or those with chronic conditions. It was concluded that most Nigerian physiotherapists had sufficient knowledge and awareness about PC and were involved in the management of patients requiring palliative care physiotherapy. ⁽⁴⁾

Also, a study conducted by a Navarro-Melendez et al (2023) Physiotherapy applied to palliative care patients: a descriptive practice-based study concluded that patients who benefited from physical therapy during their admission to palliative care unit were predominantly males with oncological processes, mainly lung cancer. Palliative care including physiotherapy improved their functionality, independence and skills for activities of daily living in this sample of palliative care unit patients. ⁽¹³⁾

Similarly, a study conducted by Katherine E. McLeod (2019) aimed to describe insights from interviews about the experience of physiotherapists providing palliative care in Ontario and their perceptions of the role and value of physiotherapists involvement in palliative care. It was concluded that the findings confirm those of research in their jurisdictions and extend their understanding of the value and meaningfulness of physiotherapy in palliative care, to patients, families and physiotherapists themselves. ⁽¹⁸⁾

A study conducted by Dr. Tabassum Saher et al (2018) result showed that physiotherapy results in improvements in a variety of aspects of patient's functions and relief of symptoms. Their study strongly indicates the role of physiotherapy in improving independency of the patients and overall quality of life. ⁽⁶⁾

Likewise, a survey that assess knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards palliative care among medical and healthcare students (2017), it was concluded that students perceived good awareness and perception level about awareness of medicine used in palliative care. ⁽¹⁴⁾

A study conducted in ISRA University Hyderabad (2015) on awareness of palliative care among physical therapist where 70% student of physiotherapy agreed that palliative care should be included in course content of physiotherapy education. It concluded that this study demonstrates widespread of understanding among Doctor of physical therapy undergraduate students of Isra University Hyderabad about palliative care. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Also, a study conducted by Senthil P Kumar et al (2010) concluded that Physical therapy was shown to have positive influence on quality of life and perceived wellbeing in a wide range of patient populations requiring palliative care such as cancer, neurological disorders, cardiopulmonary conditions and mental illnesses. ⁽⁷⁾

V. Conclusion

From this study, it appeared that there were relatively high number of working healthcare professionals with aware of role of physiotherapy in palliative care.

Future Scope: In future scope, further study can be done via offline mode for example interview method. Conducting studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of physiotherapy in palliative care and developing guidelines for practice.

Clinical Implication: The study was design to assess the awareness of role of physiotherapy in palliative care among working healthcare professionals which will effective to improve the quality of life of patients and their families who are facing problems associated with life-threatening illness. Physiotherapy in palliative care focusses on care like relieving pain, helping reduce breathlessness, supporting people through the anxiety of living with a serious condition. So, physiotherapy must be given in the palliative care which can enhance patient's quality of life.

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