

Research Influence on Clinical Practice in Physical Therapy

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Standardization and quality care is a critical issue in clinical practice of physical therapy in Pakistan due to lack of govt supervision and absence of licensing authority in the country. Many clinical setups provide traditional physical therapy services not currently supported by any empirical evidence. The opinion based treatment protocol is not enough but a standardized treatment protocol should be based on research evidences to determine the validation of physical therapy services, the efficacy of the treatment and provide bases for new developments to provide better care in the current health care system.¹ The clinicians and educationists of physical therapy profession recognized the importance of clinical research and research -informed practice of physical therapy decades ago, however it was highlighted more in the 1990s after emerging of the evidence based practice(EBP) which has been defined as "the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients."² In the Late 1990s many physical therapy professional organizations advocated to the professional community that evidence based practice (EBP) should be promoted for better and quality physical therapy care and the well-known researchers and clinicians of physical therapy professions declared that it is a moral and professional obligations of the physical therapists to base their practice on empirical evidences and abandon the techniques based on anecdotal testimonies or opinion based practice.² Therefore, only those techniques should be adopted in physical therapy practice supported by research evidence with clear scientific rationales.

The physical therapy practice since the inception of the profession was based on movements and manual techniques but the clear boundary of the profession is still not defined and because of that standardization of the clinical practice is an issue especially in the developing countries. The theoretical knowledge is not well connected with clinical practice.³ However, with development in the physical therapy education level and integration of the research in the entry level

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degree will help the graduates to be engaged in the evidence-based practice. The physical therapy clinical practice should be based on the scientific research platform. The continuing education programs can be helpful for physical therapists to gain skills in research, however partnership and cooperation between the academia and the health care system will be able to create an impact on the clinical practice.

Currently in many countries physical therapists have direct access and physical therapist is the first contact person, especially in musculoskeletal conditions. In this age of information patient self-education has been increased significantly, and they are well informed about the treatment options, prognosis, and risk of the procedure to be performed if any. Therefore, with this changing health care environment the physical therapist competency in terms of skill and research knowledge needs to be reviewed accordingly. The curriculum for clinical teaching should prepare graduates for differential diagnosis and research evidence validation skills and integrate the validated evidence to treatment protocols. In the current health care environment, expectations from today, a physical therapist is to be a critically reflective practitioner in order to perform physical therapy assessment and treatment independently and in a conscientious, effective manner.⁴

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