

The Shifting Landscape of Physical Therapy: Embracing Condition-Focused Expertise

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Over the past decade, education of Physical Therapy has experienced a remarkable development in Pakistan. Starting from Doctor of Physical Therapy- DPT to Master programs in different specialties and leading to PhD degree. According to "DPT Doctor Of Physical Therapy Scope In Pakistan" by Pakistan-pur.¹ Doctor of Physical Therapy field in Pakistan is expanding, and success in this area takes devotion, ongoing research, and an actual passion for the profession. The Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program is a five-year degree program that prepares students for a career in physical therapy. After completing the DPT program, students can enjoy a massive scope of physical therapy examination, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, intervention, preventative activities, wellness initiatives, and optimal healthcare utilization. There are multiple universities and institutes in Pakistan that offer the DPT (5-Year) degree program, most of which are in the private sector.

The professional growth is phenomenal and an impressive surge has been seen in academia. Physical therapists have been specializing in various clinical areas for quite some time, and there are already programs and certifications available for specialized practice in areas such as neuromuscular, sports, women's health, orthopedics manual, cardiovascular and pulmonary. These specializations allow physical therapists to develop advanced skills and knowledge to provide specialized care within their chosen area of expertise.²

The medical world is increasingly moving towards a more specialized approach to healthcare, focusing on specific diseases and conditions rather than generalized specialties. This change is driven by the mounting complexity of medical related conditions and the requirement for healthcare professionals with specialized knowledge and skills to treat

them effectively. This inclination towards subspecialty has steered to enhanced patient care through deeper understanding and skills of specific conditions. The disease or condition specific expertise has resulted in the development of specific, tailored, cost effective and updated diagnostic and interventional protocol. Now they have few oncologists, but they have sub- specialists in breast cancer, lung cancer is in fields to provide an updated interventional and preventive strategies. Similarly, there are joint replacement orthopedic surgeon, spinal surgeon, diabetes specialist, nephrologist etc.

As the medical world becomes more specialized, it is crucial for physical therapists to adopt a similar approach. By specializing in specific conditions, physical therapists can provide more targeted and effective care to their patients. This shift can also help improve patient outcomes and satisfaction, as specialized physiotherapists are better equipped to address the unique needs of patients with specific conditions.

Additionally, the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties certifies physical therapists in 10 specialist areas, including cardiovascular and pulmonary, clinical electrophysiology, geriatrics, neurology, oncology, orthopedics, pediatrics, sports, women's health, and wound care.³ This specialization allows physiotherapists to develop advanced skills and knowledge to provide specialized care within their chosen area of expertise. Furthermore, specialized therapy services, such as stroke rehabilitation, diabetic rehabilitation, arthritis rehabilitation, and spinal cord injury rehabilitation, are offered by clinical team members who have received specialized training and extended education.⁴ These services are tailored to the specific needs of patients with these conditions, and the therapists providing these services are passionate about and dedicated to these specific treatments.

specialized physiotherapy care can lead to better patient outcomes, as specialized physiotherapists are better equipped to address the unique needs of patients with specific conditions. By focusing on a specific condition or clinical area, physiotherapists can develop expertise in the latest treatment techniques and technologies, leading to improved patient care and outcomes.

In my opinion, it is the right time to create awareness among physiotherapists to choose the condition-oriented or dysfunction-oriented sub-disciplines or categories to foster their expertise and polish their skills. It will provide a cutting edge, cost-effective, evidence-based practice, and quality care to patients and the community. With increased research and knowledge, it is very difficult to manage a complete specialty. It is justifiable to grab the complete perspective of one single sub-discipline/category or condition. The future of therapists and the title of PT like stroke Rehab Expert, Diabetic Rehab expert, Arthritis Rehab expert, Spinal Cord Injury Specialist, Spinal manual therapist, will further open the doors of specific practice and promotion of the profession.

Some of the reasons for this shift towards condition-specific practice in physical therapy include:

1. **Advancements in medical knowledge:** As our understanding of the human body and the conditions that affect it continues to grow, physiotherapists can now focus on specific conditions and develop specialized techniques to treat patients more effectively.
2. **Patient-centered care:** Condition-specific practice allows physiotherapists to tailor their treatment plans to the unique needs of patients with specific conditions, ensuring that they receive the most appropriate care for their condition.
3. **Evidence-based practice:** As research and knowledge in the field of physical therapy advance

and the shift towards condition-specific practice in physical therapy is supported by a growing body of evidence-based research, and physiotherapists are encouraged to stay up to date with the latest evidence and best practices in their field.

4. **Increased demand for specialized care:** With the growing complexity of pathological conditions, patients are increasingly seeking specialized care from physiotherapists who have expertise in treating their specific conditions like stroke, diabetic neuropathy etc.
5. **Professional development:** Specializing in a specific condition or area of practice allows physiotherapists to develop advanced skills and knowledge, leading to improved patient outcomes and satisfaction.

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