

Awareness and Adherence to Occupational Therapy among Doctors in a Tertiary Care Hospitals

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INTRODUCTION

Patients with disability in Asia are estimated between 5-10% of the population¹ and in Pakistan estimated ratio of disability is 9.5% of population (JICA “Country Profile on Disability: Pakistan” March 2002).² Disability has become a stigma in Pakistan and the needs of disabled include lack of reliable epidemiologic data, inadequate funding, poor health infrastructure, and work force shortage.³ Thus comprehensive rehabilitation is integral to the attainment of a better quality of life for disabled persons and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation is the branch of medicine that presents today’s best Physiatrist knowledge and techniques that is ideal for whole rehabilitation team.⁴

Occupational therapy has been recognized as an important ingredient of rehabilitation. The prime focus of Occupational therapy in patients is to develop independence in Basic Activities of Daily Living (BADL) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL).⁵ The core practice of occupational therapy is the integration of multi-level variables into workable, effective and sustainable solution for the individual, groups or community within a bio-psycho-social and spiritual context.⁶ Occupational therapy as a discipline has grown and matured with the time.⁷ Occupational Therapy was introduced in Pakistan with the help of WHO in 1971, and so far there are only two institutes which are offering training program in occupational therapy. Both are located in Karachi. First school was established in 1971 at Jinnah Post-graduate Medical Center in affiliation with the University of Karachi. The second school of occupational therapy was established in 2007 as a sub-department of Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and is affiliated with Dow University of Health Sciences.

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With the aim of promoting occupational therapy in Pakistan where the number of persons with disability occupies a significant portion, the rationale of this study is to assess the awareness of occupational therapy services among doctors (pediatricians, neurologists, physicians, orthopedic surgeons) who as specialists in the clinical field play an important role in identifying and referring patients for rehabilitation. In Pakistan, there is a wide gap and majority of doctors are not familiar with the importance of occupational therapy.

However, no study has been conducted so far to the best of our knowledge which highlights the significance of this awareness among doctors in Pakistan. It is hoped that this study will help in bridging the gap.

METHODS

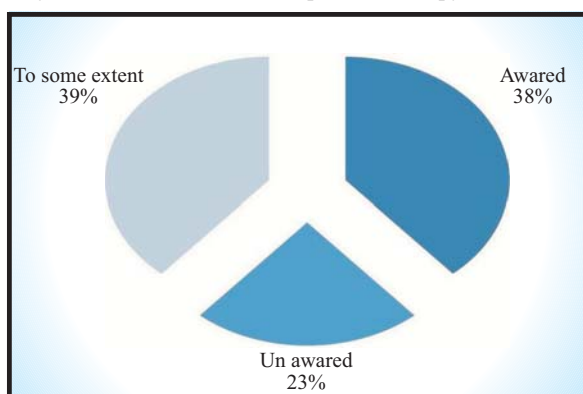
A descriptive study was carried out at the Civil Hospital, Karachi in the month of November 2010. 77 doctors (32 males and 45 females) were reported. Their age ranged from 25 to 55 years (mean age 40 years) and their qualification from MBBS to FCPS. The participants were chosen on the basis of non-probability purposive sampling with their consent. The criterion was that the doctors must be practising clinicians from the departments of neurology, pediatrics, orthopedic surgery and medicine. They were asked to rate themselves about the knowledge of Physical medicine and Rehabilitation and its services. In addition they were required to respond regarding the usage and referral to occupational therapy. Percentages were calculated to assess the awareness of occupational therapy service among doctors; to estimate the frequency of referrals to occupational therapy and to identify the rationale for minimum referral to occupational therapy. Respondent’s response to questions was taken as scores by using SPSS version 16.0.

RESULTS

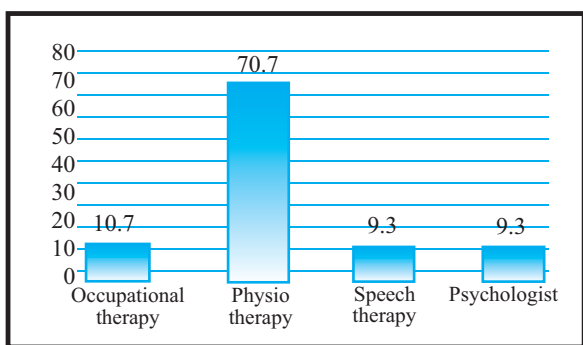
Out of 77 respondents 38% were fully acquainted with the service of occupational therapy, 39% of them were not quite aware of the service and 23% were not at all familiar with occupational therapy. Most of the respondents i.e. (70.7%) said that they referred patients for physiotherapy, 10.7% referred for occupational

therapy and only 9.3% referred cases for psychotherapy and speech therapy, respectively. Reasons for the least referral to occupational therapy reflect that 41% of participants were unaware about occupational therapy services, 16.9% were of opinion that occupational therapy is not useful. 8.9% of doctors commented that service is not easily available, 12.5% viewed that patients do not comply with the treatment and 5.4% did not refer patients because of its cost and lack of time respectively. 6.3% were of the opinion that expertise in the field is unavailable. Whereas 3.6% stated the reason is poor literacy rate of patients.

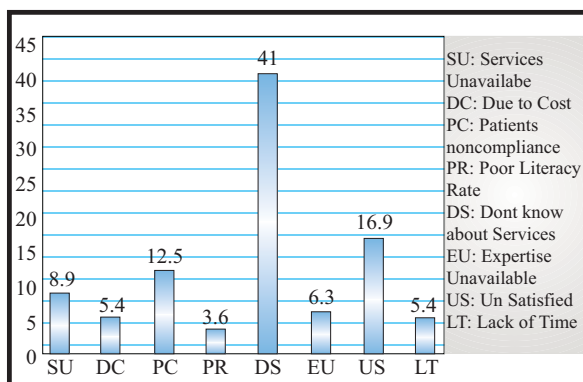
Physicians Familiar with Occupational therapy



Refferal for Rehabilitation Services



Reasons for Leave Referral to Occupational Therapy



DISCUSSION

Lack of knowledge of Physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) as a matter of fact, has left the patient not to avail this health care service. This descriptive study shows the ratio of usage of Physical medicine and rehabilitation services by doctors of Civil Hospital Karachi. A.R Dawson has also shown the equal importance of rehabilitation along with medical treatment and describes the of Physical medicine and rehabilitation as a part of therapeutic regime.⁸

The result indicates that out of 77 respondents 23% were not familiar with Occupational Therapy at all, 38% were fully acquainted with the service of occupational therapy and 39% had limited knowledge regarding occupational therapy service. This study coincides with the study that concludes that doctors were unclear about occupational therapy as a tool and found it difficult to give clear-cut reasons for referral.⁵ Evidently in developed countries the awareness is comparatively much more than in Pakistan.

The origin of Physical medicine and rehabilitation in Pakistan dates back to 1960 but the formal training program began only in 1997. Farooq A. Rathore (2011), argued that there are only a few rehabilitation institutes/departments and none have all the standard components of rehabilitation team in Pakistan although Armed Forces Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine is offering these services. As explained earlier the rate of disability has markedly increased recently and the role of PM&R has become significant to enhance the functioning and quality of life of persons with disability. However, very few studies have been conducted among the medical practitioners to study their knowledge, attitude and practise towards PM&R and its services. OT, as a crucial part of PM&R covers a huge gap of ideal situation and to highlight its importance and value in the field of rehabilitation. This study also reveals that doctors have greater knowledge and understanding of Physical Therapy and 70.7% doctors referred patients for Physical Therapy whereas only 10.7% doctors referred patients to occupational therapy. The work of Breen A, et al (2000) is evident of the fact and Present study also shows that 70.7% doctors refer patients for Physiotherapy. One of the many reasons for least referrals among doctors is that they do not know where the occupational therapy services are available.

RECOMMENDATION

This study has covered the gap between doctors and Occupational Therapists and assessed the awareness and frequency of referral to Occupational Therapy.

The need is to enhance the awareness at public and hospital level, through different programs, in addition to pro-active collaboration between rehabilitation personnel and doctors in clinical field. Further studies are yet to be made on awareness of PM&R particularly Occupational Therapy, in other tertiary care hospitals of Karachi as well. There is also the need to work on reasons for least referrals to OT, highlighted by this research, in order to increase the rate of referral to Occupational Therapy.

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