



AWARENESS AND PERSPECTIVE ABOUT ONCOLOGY PHYSICAL THERAPY IN PHYSIOTHERAPISTS.

Physiotherapy

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Activities of daily living in cancer patients are affected from 10% to 40% based on previous studies. The impairment of functioning can be a result of cancer or its treatment, and disability may vary in severity or be temporary or present for rest of a survivor's lifetime. These problems can make it harder to do daily activities or return to work. They may also have lasting effect on your health. Cancer rehabilitation can help with these problems which can happen during and after cancer treatment.

PURPOSE: To detect awareness and perspective about oncology physical therapy in physical therapists using a self-designed questionnaire.

METHODS: Observational Study using Random Sampling method. Self-designed questionnaire, validated from the institution was provided to physiotherapists. Sample size of 254 achieved & physiotherapists both practicing as academicians & clinician were included whereas undergraduate students were excluded from study.

RESULTS: 92% of therapists were aware about oncology physical therapy and 92% of the participants agree that Oncology Physiotherapy can be given in both pre-surgical and Post-surgical cases.

CONCLUSION: Even though 92% of therapists were aware about oncology physical therapy but there is lack of exposure in treating cancer patients so there is need for inclusion of PT Department in various cancer treatment centres and specific setups for cancer rehabilitation & can be achieved if basic oncology program is introduced in the Bachelor's curriculum so students are aware and get exposure to some clinical practice.

KEYWORDS

awareness oncology, oncology physiotherapy.

INTRODUCTION :

Oncology specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer & was derived from a Greek word *ongkos* meaning burden, volume, mass and the word *logos* meaning study.⁽¹⁾

The projected incidence of patients with cancer in India among males was 6,79,421 and among females 7,12,758 for the year 2020. One in 68 males, 1 in 29 females and 1 in 9 Indians will develop cancer during their lifetime.⁽²⁾

The WHO has reported that physical and psychological disabilities are common in people living with cancer.⁽³⁾ The disability manifested due to cancer can be in form of functional, cognitive and psychological limitations that can impact on a person's physical, social and emotional well-being and quality of life.

The impairment of functioning can be a result of cancer or its treatment, and disability may vary in severity or be temporary or present for rest of a survivor's lifetime. Activities of daily living are affected from 10% to 40% based on previous studies.⁽⁷⁾

These individuals usually face physical problems like pain, swelling, weakness and loss of strength, range of motion and flexibility issues, decreased endurance, skin changes from radiation therapy, lymphedema, balance issues and fear of falling, neuropathy or numbness and tingling in hands or feet, fatigue, sexual dysfunction and problems with chewing and swallowing food; mobility problems like getting up from floor or chair, walking, climbing, grooming and showering; cognitive problems like difficulty in multitasking and memory trouble.⁽⁶⁾

Physical therapists can not only set and just provide treatment goals but can also help in assessing the patient and undergo the initial screening procedure so the time is saved and services are also provided.⁽⁵⁾

The aim of the study is to detect awareness and perspective about oncology physical therapy in physical therapists using a self-designed questionnaire.

METHODOLOGY :

Research type used was Observational Study & Sample Method was Random Sampling and the targeted population was physiotherapists with sample size achieved of 254.

Inclusion criteria	
Academician	
Clinician	
Therapist working in hospital	setup and rehabilitation centers.
Post graduate students.	

Exclusion criteria

Undergraduate students

OUTCOME MEASURES :

Self-designed Questionnaire.

PROCEDURE :

A self-designed questionnaire of total 22 questions was made which included questions regarding awareness and perspective about oncology physical therapy. All questions in the questionnaire were verified by guide and all faculty members. Necessary changes were made after which the questionnaire was approved by the ethical committee of the institute.

This study involved both men and women working as physiotherapists. A total of 254 subjects were selected on the basis of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Online consent was taken from the participants.

The questionnaire was then sent to the therapists in the form of Google Forms. The responses of the participants were noted and analyzed further.

DATA ANALYSIS :

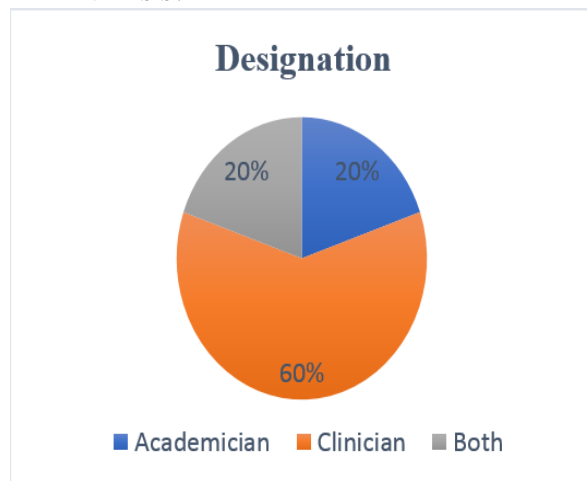


Fig 1: Designation of physiotherapists participated in the study.

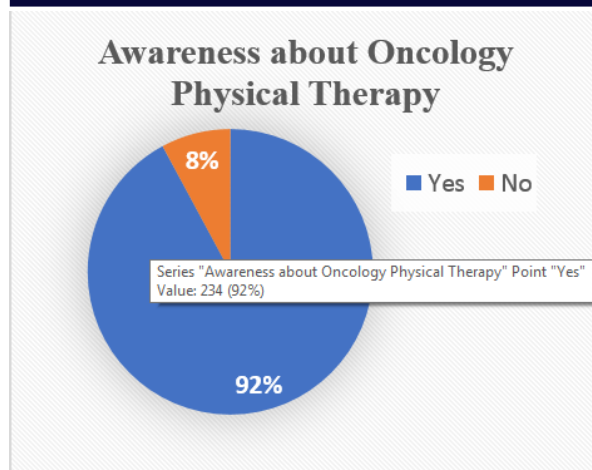


Fig 2: Awareness about Oncology Physical therapy.

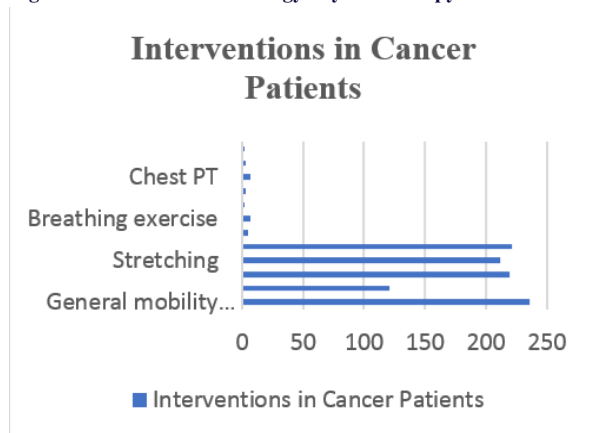


Fig 3: Presents perspective about physiotherapists on interventions in Oncology physical therapy.

RESULT:

So, 92% of therapists were aware about oncology physical therapy and 92% of the participants agree that Oncology Physiotherapy can be given in both pre-surgical and Post-surgical cases. and according to the data presented 52% people believed that it should be fragmented whereas 48% people it should be combined with other branches. Treatment protocol advised by the individuals participated in the study that demonstrates most of the physiotherapists agree that general mobility exercise, resistance training, aerobic exercises, stretching and positioning in treating cancer patients is very essential whereas few also added chest PT and lymphatic drainage to be essential in the treatment protocol.

DISCUSSION:

The cancer survival rate in India has improved with the advancement in treatment techniques, according to the last 5-year surveys as stated by a research study conducted last year but many people who have had cancer treatments have a risk of developing long term side effects. These side effects can happen after months or years after treatment including lymphedema after removal of lymph nodes and phantom limb pain after losing a limb or part of limb in cases of some bone or soft tissue cancers. So evaluating and executing appropriate treatment for the same is an important part of cancer survivorship care.⁽⁹⁾ A large survey of cancer survivors of developed countries indicated that the long term health consequences of cancer are significant in the cancer rehabilitation.⁽⁸⁾

The physiotherapists have an extensive role to play. In this study so total of 150 subjects were taken and self-designed questionnaire was provided to them through electronic means.

According to this study 60 % of individuals who participated in this study were Clinicians while 20 % of them Academicians and 20% were working as both Clinicians as well as Academicians. In the previous study conducted on this topic, 68.2 % of participants were Clinicians and 32.8 % were Academicians.⁽⁸⁾ So through this we can comment that

the number of Clinicians, Academicians and physiotherapists practicing both have equally participated in this study.

The current area of practice of physiotherapists was majorly in Outpatient Department (42%) and very few in Intensive Care Unit (2%). Inpatient Department (10%), Academic Institution (13%) whereas individuals working in a set-up which included all of the above Departments was 39%. In the previous study 11% of therapists were working in Inpatients Department, 9% were working in Academic Institution whereas 80% of physiotherapists were working in Outpatient Department and other extended facilities. This study provided data from various Departments so the exposure of oncology physical therapy has been assessed in all the Departments except Intensive Care Unit.⁽⁸⁾

The highest level of degree of individuals participated in the study are physiotherapists who have pursued Bachelor's degree (52%) and Master's degree (47%) . In the previous research conducted, 28% were holding Bachelor's degree whereas there were 69% of people who had master's degree.⁽⁸⁾

The working experience of physiotherapists in terms of year in this study depicts that 12% of people have experience >5 years, 20% of people have 2-5 years of experience, 37% of people have 1-2 years and 31% have experience up to 1 year. In the previous study, 60% of people have experience >5 years, 24.5% of people have 2-5 years of experience, 19.7% of people who have less than 2 years.⁽⁸⁾

According to this survey, 92% of therapists were aware about oncology physical therapy and 92% of the participants agree that Oncology Physical Therapy can be given in both pre-surgical and Post-surgical cases and 7% agree that it is indicated only in Post-surgical cases. This study provides physical therapists are aware that oncology physical therapy is indicated in pre-surgical and Post-surgical patients.

About 54% of all the individuals participated in the study have had previous experience of treating cancer patients while 46% of individuals show not experience for the same. The frequency of treating cancer patients by physiotherapists who have previous experience in treating cancer patients is only 13 % regularly whereas 28% occasionally and 59 % of the participants have treated the oncology patients rarely which correlated to the previous study conducted in South India. 97% agreed whereas 3 % disagreed inclusion of oncology physiotherapy in Bachelor's program maybe because they want oncology physical therapy to have a different specialty or they must believe that oncology physical therapy cannot be part of Physical Therapy.

According to the data presented 52 % people believed that Oncology physical therapy should be fragmented and kept as an individual branch of Physiotherapy whereas 48 % people it should be combined with other branches. According to the responses most of the individuals believe that oncology physical therapy should be combined with Musculoskeletal Physical Therapy (5%), Cardiopulmonary Physical Therapy (28.5%), Community Physical Therapy (19.5%) Neuro Physical Therapy (5%), whereas 42 % of individuals didn't find any of the above branches appropriate to combine with oncology physical therapy.

CONCLUSION:

According to the statistics, we can conclude that physiotherapists who are both practicing and in academicians and clinicians believe that oncology physical therapy is indicated and very helpful in cancer patients as 92% of therapists were aware about oncology physical therapy. But the exposure in treating cancer patients is less so there is a need for inclusion of Physiotherapy Department in various cancer treatment centers as well as specific setups for cancer rehabilitation. This can be achieved if a basic oncology Physiotherapy program is introduced in the Bachelor's curriculum so that the individuals are aware and get exposure to some clinical practice during their clinical postings and internship. They can also come up with some new interventions in cancer rehabilitation. This can also lead to development of more evidence based practice in field of oncology physical therapy in which research is lacking currently.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY:

This study had some limitations in terms of less sample size and low response rate.

Furthermore, as the study was done only in a small geographic area. The study did not included to which extent should Oncology Physical Therapy program should be included in the Bachelors Curriculum.

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