

# **THE IMPACT of DPT DEGREE on THE PHYSICAL THERAPY PROFESSION (SURVEY)**

## **ABSTRACT:**

The purpose of the study was to find out the impact of DPT degree on physical therapy profession. The main focus was to find out if the tendency towards the profession is because of the DPT. There is enormous growth in the profession in terms of many universities/institutes now offer the DPT degree program and significant number of students have been enrolled in the program. The physical therapy history in the country starts from 1955 but up to 2008 it was not a profession of choice. It became a favorite profession since the introduction of the new entry level degree with the Dr. title.

**Study design:** Cross sectional survey.

**Method:** A survey has been conducted through a self-structured questionnaire from the fall-2013 newly enrolled DPT students from various institutes of Rawalpindi/Islamabad and Lahore. Only 222 completed questionnaires were included in the study and data was analyzed on SPSS.

**Results:** 64.4% of the student selected the profession by choice and 35.6% enrolled in the program by chance. 52.3% participants joined the profession because of DPT degree and 47.7% enrolled because of the profession itself. 97.3% are satisfied with the profession and 2.9% showed dissatisfaction. 81.1% are satisfied with the physical therapy scope of practice in Pakistan and 18.9% showed dissatisfaction.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:** It is evident from the literature review, the studies have been conducted in USA where the DPT degree was introduced that the impact on the profession in all aspects was significant including respect, level of knowledge, skills, autonomy, trust and confidence of the patients/clients<sup>[5]</sup>. It was proved in this study too that the DPT degree has significant influence on the profession in Pakistan in terms of acceptance in the community, prestige, autonomy and level of education. In the near future hundreds of students of physical therapy profession will be graduating from all over the country's institutes. It is evident from the current statistics that we have a dire need for physical therapy and other rehabilitation professionals but the serious challenge for them will be not enough job opportunities due to lack of awareness in the community as well as among the health officials of the country. So it is highly recommended that the Govt. officials should create opportunities at the basic health unit (BHU) level up to the district and divisional hospitals so the general public has access to these very important health care professionals.

**Key words:** DPT, Physical Therapy, Impact of DPT

## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **The Physical Therapy in Pakistan: Evolution of;**

Physical Therapy evolution in different parts of the globe has enormous similarity, like in other countries, the history of physical therapy practice is very old in Pakistan but under no proper nomenclature. The ancient traditional manual techniques including various types of exercises were used and proved to be the very effective means of healing in different musculoskeletal and

neuromuscular conditions. In the rural area of the country, it was observed that people used to hang from a branch of tree to take the advantage of the traction for acute back ache, or asking a kid to perform a tandem walk on the back of a person from down to upward and cross arm and leg extension. These were some of the techniques utilized for acute low back pain.

As no profession can be perfect in the beginning, Physical Therapy passed through different stages. The growing needs of the people and the emerging challenges of each era played significant role in the growth of Physical Therapy. Keeping in view this situation we urge that the formal training program in physiotherapy was first observed during the sickness of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Governor General of Pakistan Ghulam Muhammad in 1955 while he was suffering from stroke (CVA)<sup>[1]</sup> He was advised to be cared by a physiotherapist for stroke rehabilitation. Since no qualified physiotherapist was available up to 1955 in Pakistan, therefore the services of a known qualified physiotherapist was hired from abroad.

### **The First School of Physiotherapy:**

The first school of Physiotherapy was established in 1956 by the Federal Government, Ministry of Health & Social Welfare with the assistance of World Health Organization (WHO) at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center premises, the school offered a 2 years Diploma course with the minimum entrance requirement of Secondary School Certificate (science group). During the four years period needs of the society for qualified physiotherapists enormously increased and also it was realized that the curriculum should also be upgraded to full fill the specific needs of the society. In 1961, the 2 years program was upgraded to a three years Diploma. Initially the role of physiotherapist was limited to wars and polio victims but later on the scope of practice expanded and the demand for the qualified physical therapists increased tremendously nationally and internationally.

### **First Degree Program in Physical Therapy:**

The universal objective of any health professional program is to provide quality care to the public so they could live healthy and productive life. It is a famous saying in the physical therapy community that physiotherapy does not add years to life but life to years. To achieve this objective, obviously required a high level of training which is not possible without the help of the universities, where they can produce graduates for the specific job need to be done, so university of Karachi Pakistan was the first university to affiliate the first professional degree, three years program (BSc, PT) in physical therapy in 1963 and pertinent changes were added & made in the syllabus according to the needs. As graduates physiotherapist came into practice in the country it was necessary to have changes in the scope of practice of Physical Therapy too. It is evident that with the passage of time many challenges comes and new horizons open for the development and improvement.

### **Three years degree program (BSc PT) to Four Years BS PT degree program**

The physical therapy professionals in the country struggles continuously to promote the profession according to international standards so they can get equivalence abroad and also provide better services for their fellow citizens. In 1999 the university of Karachi officials were convinced to upgrade the physical therapy curriculum to four years BSPT degree program. The

decision was a great achievement for the physical therapy professionals and it also had a good impact on the practice of physical therapy.

### **A paradigm shift:**

During the last decade along with the growth of educational standard, the scope of practice was expended too. The concept of specialized care in physical therapy was introduced but up to 2010 was not properly established. Since 2005, the direct access and autonomy of the profession has been the core issues for the physical therapists in the country. The existing curriculum of BSPT was reviewed by senior professionals including few foreign qualified physical therapists. They realized that a curriculum is needed which could prepare graduates for autonomous practice in Physical Therapy. The recommendations were forwarded to the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC). The National Curriculum Revision Committee (NCRS) was formulated by HEC, comprises of 11 members from all over the country. It was a great achievement in the history of physical therapy to have a unified curriculum throughout the country. The various other issues of the nomenclature of DPT and the use of the Dr. title with DPT and autonomous practice were addressed by the committee and consensus was made for the support of the autonomous practice and the use of the Dr. Title with clarity.

### **The First Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) and Post-Professional Doctor of Physical Therapy Degree programs:**

In 2007 Riphah International University Islamabad offered the five years DPT program after higher secondary school (12 years of schooling) and post professional 2 years program for practicing Physical Therapists after 16 years of schooling and the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan awarded Equivalency of Master/M.Phil to the (PP DPT) program [3]. The first specialized degree program Master of Science in Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapy (MS, OMPT) research based was also offered by Riphah in 2012. The Continuous Professional Development Courses and Certification in various specialized areas was also introduced by Riphah in 2012 for the first time in Pakistan.<sup>[3]</sup>

The image of the physical therapists is better perceived in the community with the higher qualification. The admiration for their services was also increased and people now consider them as clinician of their choice and have direct access to them. Now in the Country physical therapists are Doctor of Physical Therapy have the ability to diagnose and treat movement dysfunctions due to injuries or diseases. The period from 2007 to 2012 considered to be the golden age in terms of professional development. A mature entry level professional degree was introduced and recognized by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and profession got autonomous status in the country. All the members of the National Curriculum Revision Committee (NCRC) and Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) curriculum division played significant role for uplifting the profession and will always be appreciated in the history of Physical Therapy.

### **RESULTS:**

1.64.4% of the student selected the profession by choice and 35.6% enrolled in the program by chance. The percentages from various institutes are as follows:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid By choice	143	64.4	<b>64.4</b>	64.4
By Chance	79	35.6	<b>35.6</b>	100.0
Total	222	100.0	100.0	

2. 52.3% participants joined the profession because of DPT degree and 47.7 enrolled because of the profession itself:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid because of DPT	116	52.3	<b>52.3</b>	52.3
because of profession itself	106	47.7	<b>47.7</b>	100.0
Total	222	100.0	100.0	

3.97.3% are satisfied with the profession and 2.9% showed dissatisfaction:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very satisfied	149	67.1	67.1	67.1
somewhat satisfied	67	30.2	30.2	97.3
not satisfied	6	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	222	100.0	100.0	

4.81.1% is satisfied with the physical therapy scope of practice in Pakistan and 18.9% showed dissatisfaction:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very Satisfied	62	27.9	27.9	27.9
SOMewhat satisfied	118	53.2	53.2	81.1
Not satisfied	42	18.9	18.9	100.0
Total	222	100.0	100.0	

## DISCUSSION:

In the developing countries educational qualification are valued by the society based on the job opportunities and pay scale, so in the health sciences medical and dental graduates have more job opportunities and also have high pay scale. The trend is not developed yet, that students choose the degree program because of the profession but due to the financial outcome .All other health professionals have less job opportunities and also have low pay scale. The same is true for the profession of physical therapy. In most of the developing countries it is not even considered to be an autonomous profession. In many countries the education level is also not at the university level or they have no proper service structure for the graduates. In Pakistan the physical therapy entry level degree program has been upgraded to 5 years university education after 12 years of

schooling and endorsed by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan in 2011<sup>[4]</sup>. The title of the degree has been accepted as Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT). The profession now considered to be an autonomous profession and graduates of the DPT are allowed to be practitioner of choice. The change in the curriculum and the level of education also influenced the scope of practice. The results of the study proved that because of the DPT degree the profession became the popular profession in the country. It is now 3<sup>rd</sup> choice of the university students. Before 1999 only two public sector universities offer the degree program with minimal tuition fee because students were not willing to pay high tuition fee. They were not sure about the job opportunities and recognition in the society. After 2008 the acceptance in the society has been increased significantly, that's why many private sector universities now offer the DPT program with high tuition fee and students are willing to pay<sup>[3]</sup>. Currently it is a booming profession in Pakistan. From 2008 to 2013, 42 institutes now offer the DPT programs. The earthquake of 2005 was the devastating disaster in Pakistan which realized the community here the importance of rehabilitation professionals. Many jobs were created in the public as well as private sector hospitals and rehabilitation centers. The scope of practice has been defined but the regulatory authority still does not exist in the country. The results of this study proved that because of the DPT degree the acceptance, prestige and level of education has been increased significantly in Pakistan.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Few studies have been conducted to evaluate the impact of DPT degree from different aspects of the physical therapy profession and found that the Clinical doctorate had added value to the profession in all aspects and also approved by this study in a different culture and community. DPT is now the 3<sup>rd</sup> choice of the majority pre-medical students after completing their college education (12 years of schooling). The endorsement of the higher education commission (HEC) also added value to this degree program which is now considered to be formal professional education at the higher level at the university. It is a great change in terms of education level and also will have positive impact on the scope of practice.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Currently 42 recognized DPT institutes in Pakistan enroll 100 students/year so very soon there will be a huge number of DPT graduates available but due to lack of service structure and the absence of regulatory body not enough job opportunities are available in the country, so it is highly recommended that jobs for these graduates should be created at the basic health unit (BHU) to district and divisional hospitals so the public will have access to these important health care professionals. The vacancies should be created on the basis of number of patients as one full time therapist can treat 10 to 15 patients.

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