

Letter to the Editor

Received: Apr 13 2013

Accepted: May 20 2013

e-published: Jun 30 2013

Community Based Physiotherapy in India: An Obscure Profession?

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Citation: Rajan P. Community Based Physiotherapy in India: An Obscure Profession? *Health Promot Perspect* 2013; 3(1): 136-137

Dear Editor-in-Chief

Community based physiotherapy is a less known and less preferred area of specialization among physiotherapists in India. The demand in the community is large. In a conversation with one of the established Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) based in north India, the founder of the NGO, an eminent medical doctor with several years of experience in community rehabilitation said, "Our underprivileged mountain women are in dire need of physiotherapists, but it doesn't look as if physiotherapists realize this need in the community". However, the supply of community physiotherapists is less. The chief reasons for these are lack of awareness about opportunities and lack of motivation to pursue the same¹. In addition, there is seldom knowledge dissemination in the form of published research work in community based physiotherapy in India, due to which there is not much inclination for this specialization.

An online survey was conducted in August 2012 using the survey monkey software in order to look at the preference of Indian physiotherapists toward community physiotherapy. The email with the web link was sent to 31 Indian physiotherapists. The response rate was 26%. 75% were female physiotherapists. The average age was 29 years. Of these, 62.5% were in Post graduate program and 50% in year 2 of the program and 37.5% in the final year. Majority of the respondents (75%) came from a musculoskeletal specialization and 12.5% each in neurosciences and cardio pulmonary streams. None had chosen community physiotherapy as a specialization. The prime reason for pursuing orthopedic specialization was a liking for the subject. There seemed to exist confusion about the field of community based physiotherapy. In the words of one respondent, "It (community based physiotherapy) does not have any scope in India". Another physiothe-

rapist opined, “It is a good field but I am not aware about it.”

It is easier to suggest the solutions when the problems are identified. Many NGOs place advertisements for the need of community based physiotherapists on their websites, so such opportunities could be accessed from there. This could be one solution to the problem of “lack of awareness” that was expressed by the physiotherapists. Also, disseminating knowledge through use of journals, conferences and public platforms could help in keeping the physiotherapists informed and probably motivate them to work more in this field. Physiotherapy is a profession that ensures better and faster recovery of the people. Community based physiotherapy is the specialization of the physiotherapy that ensures better and faster

recovery of communities. India is a developing nation with limited resources and exploding population. In addition to tackling individual level problems, rehabilitation of communities can yield quicker outcomes, which seemingly might be one of the solutions to the current “health-care debt” that India is facing ².

References

1. Rajan P. Community-based physiotherapy in Western India: Some findings from Surveys. *Dis CBR Inclusive Develop* 2012; 23 (4); 90-6.
2. WHO, India tries to break cycle of health-care debt <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/88/7/10-020710/en>. [Accessed 20 March 2013].