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Awareness, Attitude, Belief, and Motivation of Health Care Professionals towards Obstetrics and Gynecological Physical Therapy

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ABSTRACT

Physical therapy focuses on various health issues of women like: women with pregnancy, after delivery, pelvic floor dysfunction, uterine prolapse, polycystic ovary, and pelvic floor dysfunction was known as Gynecological physical therapy. Healthcare professionals should be aware of and motivate patients toward the significance of physical therapy in gynecological issues. **Objective:** To determine the awareness, attitude, belief and motivation of healthcare professionals of Karachi towards gynecological physical therapy. **Methods:** This was a cross-sectional survey-based study that was conducted from November-2023 to April- 2024, the study population was healthcare professionals from seven districts of Karachi and the sample size was 389, the sampling technique was non-probability purposive sampling. The validated questionnaire was used to evaluate the attitude, beliefs, and motivation of healthcare professionals towards gyne PT. The data were analyzed through SPSS version 23.0. **Results:** There were 389 healthcare professionals recruited from different districts of Karachi. The level of awareness among the research participants was 36.24%, the belief of research participants regarding the gynae physical therapy was good towards the effectiveness of treatment 44.21% believed that pelvic floor exercises were effective in gynecological problems, 39.33% were highly motivated towards the physical therapy treatment. However, 35.21% thought that the training in the gynecological field was limited and the referral system was thought to be limited by 19.28% of research participants. **Conclusions:** This study concluded the level of awareness and motivation was good enough among healthcare professionals of our study while there was a lack of referral systems and training programs available in this field of physical therapy.

INTRODUCTION

Women's health services provided by physical therapy were discovered in the clinical settings of obstetrics and gynecology [1]. The health services provided to the women undergoing childbirth, treatments, and guidance are needed in both antenatal and postnatal periods including both antenatal and postnatal classes, management of urinary incontinence, and post-operative care in patients who undergoing gynecological surgery [2]. According to the study, the prevalence of pelvic inflammatory disease in Pakistan is 12.8% although patients with this condition are

not primarily referred for physical therapy service until the pharmacological treatment is limited and resisted and in this condition modality used by physical therapists i.e.: short wave diathermy is effective [3]. Gynecological physical therapy focused on various health issues of women like treatment of genital areas, women with pregnancy, after delivery, pelvic floor dysfunction, vaginal or pelvic pain, musculoskeletal issues related to antenatal and postnatal women, osteoporosis, rehabilitation after breast surgery, lymphedema treatment, menopausal



women, young athletes prevention and other serious conditions that specifically affect the females and they need prevention, management through exercises and education related to the problems [4]. Physical therapists provide knowledge related to accurate posture, and strengthening of muscles of the pelvic floor region through various interventions used in physical therapy treatment [5]. Specialized physical therapists are required to deal the patients related to gynecological complications because this field needs mature and experienced physical therapists who can collect the all personal and useful information of women related to their private lives [6]. The knowledge of gynecologists regarding the role of physical therapists in gynecological health issues is a crucial part of the healthcare system which needs to be enhanced by the promotion of healthcare services offered by physical therapy treatment through workshops, training sessions, and hands-on practice sessions [7]. According to the study, physical therapy treatment is useful in increasing the conception rate of women having infertility issues [8]. Physical therapy is one of the fields that is useful in various issues despite this being neglected by the people due to the lack of awareness in Pakistan [9]. Moreover, rehabilitation medicine is also neglected in Asia and Africa due to the lack of referrals from doctors [10]. According to a study done in Pakistan, about 60 to 65% of gyne doctors have awareness regarding antenatal physical therapy while 69% have awareness regarding postnatal physical therapy services [11]. Another study revealed gynecologists have an awareness regarding the role of physical therapy in the treatment of gyne problems in their patients but they express their low concern towards it and take no bother for the reference of patients to the physical therapists [12]. Around the world, Obesity is the leading cause of increasing disease and death rates while women having gynecological issues along with obesity can cause serious illness and may lead to prolonged disability [13]. Being a physically active woman is a blessing to any female during their antenatal and postnatal periods but the obese women prone to have common issues of hyperlipidemia, carcinoma of the rectal region, infertility, menstrual dysfunction as well as Polycystic Ovaries (PCO) [14]. So, it is necessary to have a physically active status of health during the reproductive life of a women it will help to facilitate the natural process of fertility and mental stability.

The purpose of this study is to determine the level of awareness, attitude, belief, and motivation of healthcare professionals in Karachi towards gynecological physical therapy.

METHODS

It was a cross-sectional study conducted among the healthcare professionals of Karachi from November-2023

to April- 2024. Data were collected through online Google Forms. The sample size of this study was 389 which was calculated through sample size calculator by Raosoft. According to the population of healthcare professionals of Karachi. The non-probability purposive sampling was used. The inclusion criteria were both genders, healthcare professionals like consultants, doctors, physical therapists, and paramedical staff who were currently working in hospital setups of Karachi, the age between 20 to 55 years, and research participants having at least 1 year of working experience to 30 years. Those participants were excluded from our study who were not willing to participate in the study and who were working in academic setups. A validated questionnaire that was already used in the previous study in 2022 in which demographic information of research participants as well as questions related to awareness, attitude, motivation, and belief was included to evaluate the knowledge of healthcare professionals regarding gynecological Physical Therapy [15]. The data were analyzed through the SPSS version 23.0 software through which frequencies and percentages of different variables of research participants was determined.

RESULTS

There were 389 healthcare professionals recruited from Karachi. The demographic information of research participants comprising of: age, designation, years of experience, types of institute and seven districts were mentioned in table 1.

Table 1: Demographical Data of Study Participants

Variables	Frequency (%)
Age	
20-25	53 (13.62%)
26-30	76 (19.53%)
31-35	89 (22.87%)
36-40	68 (17.48%)
41-45	52 (13.36%)
46-50	39 (10.02%)
51-55	12 (3.08%)
Designation	
Physicians	48 (12.33%)
Doctors	91 (23.39%)
Physical Therapists	132 (33.93%)
Paramedical staff	118 (30.33%)
Years of Experience	
1-5	134 (34.44%)
6-10	105 (26.99%)
11-15	69 (17.73%)
16-20	38 (9.76%)
21-25	24 (6.16%)
26-30	19 (4.88%)
Type of Institute	
Government	76 (19.53%)

Semi government	105 (26.99%)
Private	208 (53.47%)
District	
East	61 (15.68%)
West	59 (15.16%)
South	38 (9.76%)
North	72 (18.50%)
Central	90 (23.13%)
Malir	21 (5.39%)
Korangi	36 (9.25%)
Kemari	12 (3.08%)

When we asked questions related to motivation how much they were motivated to practice gynecological physical therapy they answered 24.93% strongly agree, 39.33% agree, 15.16% neutral, 8.99% disagree, 6.94% disagree, and 4.62% responded I don't know. In response to the question related to the awareness about gynecological physical therapy treatment, 28.79% strongly agree, 36.24% agree,

21.33% neutral, 7.45% disagree, 3.59% strongly disagree, and 2.57% responded I don't know. Regarding questions related to education and training, 35.21% strongly agree, 22.62% agree, 16.45% were neutral, 12.08% disagree, 7.96% strongly disagree, and 5.65% said I don't know. Responded there were not enough educational programs or workshops available in this domain. The reaction of the healthcare professionals regarding the belief that pelvic floor treatment was not effective in POP (Pelvic Organ Prolapse) and UI (Urinary Incontinence) 6.94% strongly agree, 8.74% agree, 5.91% neutral, 44.21% disagree, 28.79% strongly disagree, and 5.39% were answered I don't know. Questions related to the employment status that the referral system was limited in this domain 19.28% strongly agree, 21.59% agree, 14.65% neutral, 27.50% disagree, 15.16% strongly disagree, and 1.79% responded I don't know as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Awareness, Attitude, Beliefs and Motivation of Healthcare Care Professionals towards Gynecological Patient

Statement	Strongly Agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Neutral N (%)	Disagree N (%)	Strongly Disagree N (%)	I Don't Know N (%)
Motivation						
I am Motivated to Practice Gynecological Physical Therapy	97 (24.93%)	153 (39.33%)	59 (15.16%)	35 (8.99%)	27 (6.94%)	18 (4.62%)
Awareness						
Gynecological PT includes POP, UI, Pelvic Pain, Hysterectomy, Antenatal, and Postnatal Care	112 (28.79%)	141 (36.24%)	83 (21.33%)	29 (7.45%)	14 (3.59%)	10 (2.57%)
PT can be Effective in 50-70% of Patients	82 (21.07%)	98 (25.19%)	64 (16.45%)	94 (24.16%)	39 (10.02%)	12 (3.08%)
PT can be Effective in 50-70% of Patients	104 (26.73%)	85 (21.85%)	76 (19.53%)	69 (17.73%)	52 (13.36%)	3 (0.77%)
Education and Training						
During my Undergraduate Study, there was Insufficient Exposure and Teaching to Gynecological PT	123 (31.63%)	103 (26.47%)	72 (18.50%)	53 (13.62%)	30 (7.71%)	8 (2.05%)
There are not Enough Educational Programs or Workshops Available [Master or Doctoral]	137 (35.21%)	88 (22.62%)	64 (16.45%)	47 (12.08%)	31 (7.96%)	22 (5.65%)
Attitudes and Beliefs						
Religiously it is not Acceptable to Perform Gynecological PT	41 (10.53%)	19 (4.88%)	22 (5.65%)	191 (49.10%)	103 (26.47%)	13 (3.34%)
I Believe that Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy is not Effective In Treating POP and UI	27 (6.94%)	34 (8.74%)	23 (5.91%)	172 (44.21%)	112 (28.79%)	21 (5.39%)
Employment and Career						
There are not Many Job Offers to Practice	87 (22.36%)	134 (34.44%)	86 (22.10%)	57 (14.65%)	16 (4.11%)	9 (2.31%)
There is Limited Referral by Physicians for Gynecological PT	75 (19.28%)	84 (21.59%)	57 (14.65%)	107 (27.50%)	59 (15.16%)	7 (1.79%)

DISCUSSION

A common belief was that knowledge about healthcare facilities was mainly in private hospitals but in Pakistan where people used to visit government hospitals for the treatment of gynecology, the enhancement in the awareness and availability of healthcare services advised by physical therapists was a very crucial aspect of every government hospital [16]. In the present study, data were collected from healthcare professionals from all three sectors of hospitals: 19.53% from a government hospital, 26.99% from semi-government hospitals, and 53.47% from private hospitals. Previous literature focuses on the

importance of physical therapy treatments in the field of gynae and obs [17]. While the attitude of healthcare professionals was not shown in any of the literature from Pakistan. The main objective of this research was to find out the awareness, attitude, belief and motivation of healthcare professionals toward gynecological physical therapy it was observed that: (64.26%) healthcare professionals agree that they were motivated towards the physical therapy practice in gynae patients. The response of healthcare professionals towards the question related to the awareness of different gynecological conditions that

can be treated by physical therapy treatment (65.03%) of participants agreed that they were aware and they thought 98 (25.19%) of physical therapy treatment can be effective in 50 to 70% of cases. However, a misconception was seen in our study among the research participants that physical therapy treatment only treats gynae patients with Kegel exercises. A study revealed, that their research participants had less experience in gynecological physical therapy and most of their participants belonged to the general medical field therefore they have lack of awareness related to gynecological physical therapy as compared to others [18]. A study reported that the majority of research participants were seniors and they belonged to the gynecological field and they responded against the question related to the exposure and opportunities training of gynecological therapy was deficient and not easily available to all healthcare professionals as compared to this from study the lack of training in gynecological treatment during undergraduate programs was observed about 123(31.63%) responded strongly agreed in addition to this there was not enough training or seminars available that can increase the level of education in public and healthcare professionals related gynecological physical therapy the response of this research participants was 137(35.21%) strongly agreed in this regards [19]. A study reported the attitude and practice of gynae doctors towards physical therapy treatment that they have better knowledge than the senior registrars that physiotherapy and they know that it can be effective 98.5% in postnatal patients, 82.1% in antenatal patients, 98.5% in uterine prolapse patients, 70.1% in post-hysterectomy patients, 32.8% in pelvic inflammatory conditions, 7.5% in cervical incompetence 56.7% in other gynecological conditions in comparison to this in this study the attitude and belief of healthcare professionals concerning the non-acceptance of gynecological physical therapy treatment in Islam was: 191(49.10%), while 27(6.94%) healthcare professionals were fully aware of the effectiveness of pelvic floor exercises in the treatment of uterine prolapse and pelvic organ prolapse [20]. The referral system of gynecological physical therapy was shown to be almost same percent i.e. almost half sample was agreeing and half were disagreeing among the healthcare professionals this factor was counter by the study, in which they reported, that the referral system of patients for the treatment of gynecological problems was minimal [21].

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that the level of awareness among the research participants regarding the role of physical therapy in gynecological patients and they were highly motivated to treat the patients with this problem however, the feasibility of training programs, seminars, workshops,

and webinars was poor and they were being unable to enhance the knowledge regarding the gynecological physical therapy in addition, the referrals of patients was limited.

Authors Contribution

Conceptualization: RHT

Methodology: SI¹, SI²

Formal analysis: OA

Writing, review and editing: RHT, SS, SRB, SI¹AB, N

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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