District Nurses’ Perceptions on the Need of Physiotherapy Intervention at Home

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**Definition**

**Home** refers to the physical and social environment of the long term accommodation of a person as opposed to a hospital or other institutional setting (e.g. nursing home) (Wade, 2003).
Aim

To determine district nurses’ perceptions on the need of physiotherapy intervention within the home environment, and the factors which influence these perceptions.
Objectives

- To determine nurses’ perceptions on physiotherapeutic intervention.
- To identify background information of participants.
- To obtain information regarding the health of the patient population visited by the participants.
- To determine the present use of physiotherapy services by the patients visited by participants.
- To determine whether participants think that there is a need for physiotherapy at home.
- To determine whether their nursing characteristics affect their perceptions on physiotherapeutic intervention.
Twenty-five (25) out of forty (40) district nurses operating within the Malta Memorial District Nursing Association (MMDNA) in Malta.

Reasons:
1. They visit people in their own home regularly.
2. Many people feel more comfortable talking to a nurse rather than their GP and are thus more likely to express their needs (McKenna & Keeney, 2004).
The research tool used was a self-administered questionnaire devised by the researcher since no adequate tool was found.

A pilot study was carried out on 5 participants after which several changes were made to the tool.

A second pilot study was carried out on another 5 participants.
The Questionnaire

Divided into 3 sections:

1) Background information on participants (e.g. experience).

2) Quantitative data regarding health of patients, physiotherapy services (considering patients visited during the previous week) & on the role of the physio.

3) Qualitative data
Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analysed by means of Pearson’s chisquare test ($\chi^2$) and presented in tables, graphs and/or pie charts.

Qualitative data was analysed by means of content analysis.
Results

Eighteen (18) nurses out of 25 responded to the questionnaire.

89% (16n) >10 years of nursing experience

67% <10 years experience within MMDNA.
Nurses visited more than 20 patients per week.

61% of patients were 60 years and older.

The most common health conditions were:
- arthritis (24%),
- cardiac problems (17%),
- amputation (12%),
- CVA (9%). (524 patients)
All nurses replied that at least one patient was receiving physiotherapy.

6 nurses said that more than 5 of their patients receive physiotherapy.

72% (13) of nurses stated that they thought some of their patients required physiotherapy.
Participants reported that 80 patients from 507 patients visited, made use of physiotherapy services mostly at St. Luke’s Hospital (78%), Zammit Clapp Hospital (67%) or by a private physiotherapist (44%).
In one question, nurses were provided with a scale to rate statements relating to the role of the physiotherapist which was used to determine perceptions.

84% of nurses agreed with statements regarding the role of the physiotherapist.
- Best possible perception level = 18
- Good perception level = 32 - 46
- Average perception level found = 33.22
Participants have a good level of perception on physiotherapy.

The level of perception was found to influence the number of patients that nurses thought would benefit from physiotherapy. \( (\chi^2 = 69.51, p = 0.001) \).

Perception was found to be partly determined by nursing experience \( (\chi^2 = 92.58, p = 0.001) \).
- Best possible perception level = 18
- Good perception level = 32 - 46
- Average perception level = 33.22
Low perceptions levels were found for the following:

- improve balance capabilities (J)
- help control dermatological conditions (K)
- help reduce shortness of breath (M)
- help reduce occurrence of falls (O)
- help control pain (P)
- help prevent further disability (Q).
Nurses were also asked on the method of referral.

All provided an appropriate method but several answers were different showing that there is no distinct way or policy on method of referral.
Conclusion/Suggestions

District nurses have a good level of perception on physiotherapy which allows them to identify patients who require physiotherapy intervention and thus refer appropriately.

Perceptions of nurses on other professionals could be analysed so that adequate referrals can be done.

A definite referral system could be defined to facilitate and encourage appropriate referral.
Conclusions/Suggestions

The need for physiotherapy intervention within the home was acknowledged by nurses who stated that for patients who have an increased level of dependency, this was the only way of receiving physiotherapeutic intervention.
The need for nursing care was not entirely dependent on age. This is also supported by research. This implies that physiotherapy services provided at home is also needed by all age groups. However, currently physiotherapy services at home are only provided for people older than 60.
Thank You for Your Attention!