

Postgraduate Physiotherapy students' perception towards postgraduate course in Physiotherapy

Y. Praveen Kumar¹, Y Pallavi Praveen Kumar²

¹Associate professor, Department of Cardio and Electrotherapy, ²Associate professor, Department of Community Physiotherapy, VSPM College of Physiotherapy, Digdoh hills, Hingna Road, Nagpur-19.

praveenwhy@yahoo.com

Abstract:

Physiotherapy has become a first option choice over a period of time. Various factors have influenced this trend amongst postgraduates. This study was conducted in order to know the perception of postgraduate students towards the postgraduate course in which they are currently enrolled. A descriptive questionnaire based study was carried out on postgraduate students. Convenient sampling was used to collect data from 21 students. The questionnaire used for the study was a semi structured questionnaire which included 15 questions. We observed that most of the students had similar responses towards their choice of postgraduate course but variations did exist for what they would do after post graduation and it was very interesting to know that most of the students opted for being a teacher or setting up own clinics.

Keywords: Perception, Physiotherapy, Postgraduates.

Introduction:

Physiotherapy has gained importance over a period of time. The course which initially started as certificate course is now offering courses up to doctorate levels. Postgraduate

education has gained a lot of importance in the field of physiotherapy. Traditionally only few postgraduate seats were available, so the enrolled students for postgraduate students were in small numbers. Therefore all postgraduates had many avenues after graduation. Currently due to increased postgraduate seats and increase in number of individuals completing the course and fewer job options, there is a decline in interest for postgraduate courses in Physiotherapy. Few of the postgraduates have also thought of changing their profession despite putting in tireless efforts for 7 long years learning physiotherapy. Moreover, variation in duration of postgraduate course has also had an impact on postgraduate education. World Health Organization World Health Report (WHO 2000:76) has stated that human resources act as a major input component in any healthcare system (1). It can be safely argued that the performance of health care systems, ultimately depend on the knowledge skills and motivation of the people responsible for delivering such services. Fecteau (2) and Fincher Corb et al (3) have worked on perceptions of physiotherapy students at various stages of professional studies and have found variations.

Keeping all this in mind, we have planned this innovative study on postgraduate student of physiotherapy in order to know the perception of postgraduate students towards postgraduate course in which they are currently enrolled.

Objectives:

1. To obtain perceptions of postgraduate students towards postgraduate course.
2. To determine their choices as career options after post graduation.

Material &Methods:

A descriptive questionnaire based study was carried out on postgraduate students of VSPM College of Physiotherapy during 2013 -2014 academic year who voluntarily

consented for being the subjects for the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Committee.

The students belonged to 2nd & 3rd year Masters of Physiotherapy. The first year students were still not enrolled for the academic year so did not form part of the study. In all there were 22 students of which one was absent so the data was collected from 21 students. Convenient sampling was used and all the students present on the day of survey and who voluntarily consented to be a part of the study were the source from whom the data was collected. The data was collected by the responses obtained from the questionnaire.

The questionnaire used for the study was a semi-structured questionnaire which included 15 questions. The questionnaire was validated by the subject experts and medical education faculty. The first 12 questions were designed to address issues pertaining to the postgraduate course and 13th question was a question regarding what they would do after completion of post graduation and had 5 options. In order to have objectivity in questionnaires, the first 12 questionnaires were rated according to 5 point Likert scale (4) with 1 as strongly agree, 2 as agree, 3 as neither agree nor disagree, 4 as disagree & 5 as strongly disagree. Question 14 and 15 were open ended questions about any 3 things they liked and disliked about the course.

Data analysis:

The raw data obtained from the study by the responses of the postgraduate students from the questionnaire was entered in the Microsoft Excel sheet 2007 and was analyzed by Epi-Info software. The study being descriptive in nature all the responses were expressed in percentages.

Results:

The results obtained from the study have shown the following responses as depicted in. The responses were obtained from 21 students, 33.33 % strongly agreed and 66.66 % agreed that Postgraduate course is interesting, 71.42 % agreed and 19.04 % strongly agreed that they would continue to work in India after post graduation. 41.61 % of individuals agreed and 41.61 % strongly agreed that they would continue in the same field after post graduation. 80.95 % of students agreed and 14.28% strongly agreed that postgraduate course helps in improving the practical skills. Most of the students either agreed or strongly agreed that postgraduate course helps in improving teaching skills & also felt that they have become better researchers during post graduation. Students also felt that postgraduate course offers better job opportunities. Majority of students strongly disagreed and disagreed that they would quit the field after post graduation however few students neither agreed nor disagreed. There was a mixed response in regards to compulsions for all to undergo post graduation. There was also a mixed response for the question post graduation in physiotherapy improves the status in the society. None of the 21 students felt that Postgraduate course is sheer waste of time. Majority of the students also felt that prospects in physiotherapy are good and 2 years of post graduation duration is better than 3 years. Most of the students are interested to join as teacher after post graduation (Fig. 1).

After post graduation I would like to

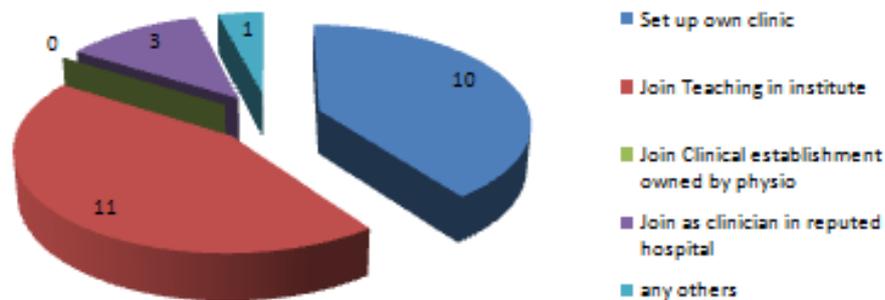


Figure 1: Students’ response for career options after post graduation

When asked about 3 things they liked about the course, majority said that they were receiving immense help from guides, their basics were clarified, and their skills were improved. Things they disliked about the course were absence of separate independent Council for the profession, 3 years duration of the course, inability to prescribe the medicine and lower pay.

Discussion:

The results obtained from this study indicate that most of the students’ perception towards the physiotherapy had similar responses but variations did exist for what they would do after post graduation and it was very interesting to know that most of the students opted for teaching profession or setting up own clinics.

But study of Gibbs (5) has emphasized that even teachers are required to be able to survive the demands, threats and challenges of teaching and also stated that for being an effective teacher they need to be persistent, flexible, innovative and prepared fully in the case of failure. These things should be kept in mind before choosing teaching as profession.

Also, there are certain challenges when one plan to set up his/her own clinic (6). Awareness and knowledge, skill, motivation, practicalities, acceptance and belief are all essential and should be taken care of before setting up own clinics.

The results of becoming a teacher is slightly contradictory to a previous study from India (7) in which students preferred to work in multispecialty hospitals, the reason could be that our study subjects comprised only graduates (8-9).

Most respondent postgraduate students agreed or strongly agreed to work in India after completion of studies. Thus the results of our study rules out the common belief that physiotherapists preferred to work abroad and these results are similar to a study done in Mangalore on graduate students (7). This study further supports the fact that the majority of students would continue with the profession suggesting that the students were happy with the profession and had no intentions to change their career choice (7). The findings have also demonstrated that postgraduate course is interesting and the skills and learning has been enhanced in postgraduate course.

Conclusion:

It can thus be concluded that the perception of postgraduate students towards postgraduate physiotherapy course is hopeful and they would continue work in India as teachers or set up their own clinics.

Impact:

The study has clearly shown that the postgraduate course should be for a period of 2 years and if at all it is for 3 years then it should be uniformly of same duration across the country. More job avenues should be created in teaching institutes and all the stakeholders in physiotherapy should collectively work towards having an independent central council.

Limitations:

The limitation of the study was that it did not include students from other colleges in India and a lack of prospective follow up.

Acknowledgement:

The authors thank the management of V.S.P.M. College of Physiotherapy, Mr. Nayse for statistical support.

References:

1. The World Health Report, Health Systems Improving Performance. Geneva: World Health Organization, World Health Organization 2000.
2. Fecteau L. Perceptions held by the physical therapy student of the professional role of the physical therapist and of self in that role. Master's Thesis, Birmingham, AL, The University of Alabama at Birmingham 1983.
3. Fincher Corb D, Pinkston D, Harden RS, O'Sullivan P, Fecteau L. Changes in students' perceptions of the professional role. *Phys Ther* 1987; 67: 226-233.
4. Likert scale available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Likert_scale.
5. Gibbs CJ. Effective teaching: Exercising self-efficacy and thought control of action. Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand, Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association Exeter England 2002. Online available from: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002390.htm>.
6. How to change practice: Understand, identify and overcome barriers to change. National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence Published by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence December 2007.

7. Jain R, Menezes RG, Chawla P, Rao PPJ, Kotian MS, Jain A. Career choice among physiotherapy students at Mangalore, India. *J Clinical and Drug Research* 2011; 5(2): 344-346.
8. Ohman A, Stenlund H, Dahlgren L. Career choice, professional preferences and gender? The case of Swedish physiotherapy students. *Adv Physiother* 2001; 3: 94-107.
9. Nordholm LA, Westbrook MT. Career selection, satisfaction and aspirations among female students in five health professions. *Aust Psychol* 1981; 16: 63-76.