

Full Length Research Paper

Awareness of the Importance and Utilization of Physiotherapy Services among Nurses in Tertiary Hospitals in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Utilization of individual professional skills depends on the cooperation among health team members and the extent to which they value the knowledge of other team members in discharging their services to the patient, who is the main focus of the team. The study aims to determine the awareness of the importance and utilization of physiotherapy services among nurses in tertiary hospitals in Anambra state. This was a cross sectional survey involving 201 nurses, consecutively selected from tertiary hospitals in Anambra state. The study instrument used was a 28-item self-reported questionnaire and data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics; Kruskal-Wallis test Spearman-rank order correlation at $\alpha = 0.05$. Majority of the participants portrayed good level of awareness (74.1%), while about 56.2% of the participants portrayed good level of utilization and 53.7% had good perception of how important physiotherapy services are in patients' management. More Senior and Principal Nursing Officers than Nursing Officers I and Nursing Officers II had higher awareness and importance level (40.06+5.32 and 68.23+10.26 respectively), but fair utilization (7.86+2.315) of physiotherapy services. There was also significant correlation between awareness and importance, awareness and utilization, and importance and utilization with $P < 0.05$. Though nurses portrayed a good awareness level of physiotherapy services, majority of them indicated that they needed to be enlightened more on roles of physiotherapy services. There is however the need to raise awareness of the importance of physiotherapy services among nurses

Keywords: Awareness, Importance, Utilization, Physiotherapy and Nurses.

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INTRODUCTION

Team work has been shown to be desirable for achieving quality outcomes in health services through facilitation of information flow and coordination, and provision of health care within the increasing diversity of disciplines in health care (Masnar, 2009). In Nigeria, clinical services are often organized along strict professional lines and teams are formed by and within individual professions independent of one another (Iyoke et al, 2015). Physiotherapist, nurses, doctors and other health professionals often work as a part of a team to plan and manage treatment for specific conditions (Kaur and Kaushal, 2016). Physiotherapists are health care professionals who provides' treatment to individuals in order to develop, maintain and restore maximum movement and functional ability throughout a person's lifespan (Maruf et al, 2012; Ekediegwu, 2019; Umar et al, 2019). Over the years physiotherapy has been recognized as a popular mode of treatment that decreases the disability and dependency rate of patients (Al-Eisa et al, 2016). Physiotherapists and nurses are among the integral components that co-manage patients in intensive Care unit (ICU), (Pranati and Narasimman, 2013), rehabilitation of older adults in acute health care, management of pain (Ekechukwu et al, 2018), rehabilitation of patient with physical disability and chronic illness (Egwuonwu et al, 2016), antenatal and postnatal care, pediatrics and gynecology conditions (Oluka et al, 2020). Physiotherapists and nurses have close relationship in patient's health management as they provide direct care to patients, assisting with ambulatory care, and positioning of patient, therefore their rapport with each other will be of more benefit to the patient's health improvement. Some findings suggest that the therapists relied on nurses and health care assistants for therapy carry-over (Atwal et al, 2006). Literature indicates that medical professionals including nurses may not have adequate knowledge of all the available physiotherapy services or how physiotherapy can help their patients (Maruf et al, 2012). A study suggests that physiotherapists need to become more aware of the ways in which nurses perceive the respective roles of the two professions in rehabilitation, in order to understand what nurses are communicating, and to communicate more effectively in return (Dally and Sim, 2001). Another study exploring inter-professional perceptions of physiotherapists and midwives, using the nominal group technique and follow-up questionnaires, identified the lack of awareness about each other's discipline (Pranati and Narasimman, 2013). The greatest challenge facing physiotherapists is creating awareness among the masses and other healthcare providers about the role of physiotherapy in health care delivery (Ramanandi et al, 2019). Just as poor awareness about a profession can lead to

misconceptions about it, good awareness can enhance its appreciation and use (Achterbergh and Vriens, 2002), thus good awareness of the roles of physiotherapy in the health care delivery system may influence adequate use of it.

METHODS

Study site

This study was a cross sectional study in which the participants were Nursing Officers II, Nursing Officers I, Senior and Principal Nursing Officers working at the following University Teaching Hospitals in Anambra state, south east of Nigeria: Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital Nnewi, Anambra state and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Teaching Hospital Amaku, Awka, Anambra State. The participants were selected using consecutive sampling technique. The study instrument was a 28-item self-report questionnaire in English Language adapted from a previously validated instrument utilized by (Odunaiya et al, 2013) in South-western Nigeria and (Maruf et al, 2012) in Nnewi north LGA in Anambra state. Expert consensus was reached for the face and content validation of the questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed mainly to measure the awareness of the importance and utilization of physiotherapy services among nurses. The questionnaire consisted of four pages and has four sections, which included, demographic characteristics, awareness of nurses on physiotherapy services and places physiotherapist work, the extent nurses view the importance of physiotherapy services in some conditions and nurses' specialties and the extent of utilization of physiotherapy services by nurses. The awareness, importance and utilization scales was in an open-ended, close-ended, and Likert format.

Ethical approval was sorted and obtained from the ethical committee (NAU/FHST/2021/MRH42) of Faculty of Health Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nnewi Campus, before the commencement of the study. A letter of introduction was obtained from the Department of Medical Rehabilitation, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nnewi Campus, which introduced the researcher to the chief medical director of the selected tertiary hospitals in Anambra state. Informed consent was obtained from the participants. A 28 item self-reported questionnaire was used for data collection. Obtained data was summarized using the descriptive statistics of mean, frequency counts and percentage, as well as independent sample of kruskal-wallis test, and spearman rank order correlation test, with the statistical significance level set at $P < 0.05$.

RESULTS

The total of 201 nurses participated in this study, 23(11.4%) were male and 178(88.6) were female. Majority of the nurses that participated in this study were Nursing Officers II and were aged between, 21-30 years and 31-40 years. It took 145(72.1%) participants 3-5 years to complete their years of study/training, with majority of the participants 155(77.3%) reporting that they have been in practice within 1-10 years, as shown in table 1.

Table1. Socio-demographic distribution of the participants

Variable	Class	f (%)
Present career status	Nursing Officer (ii)	139 (69.2)
	Nursing Officer (i)	27 (13.4)
	Senior and Principal Nursing Officers	35 (17.5)
Name of hospital of practice	NAUTH	145 (72.1)
	COOUTH	56 (27.9)
Place of undergraduate study/training	UNIZIK	75 (37.3)
	CON.COOUTH	26 (12.9)
	CON.Adazi	22 (10.9)
	SON&M.Iyenu	21 (10.5)
	SON.Ihiala	11 (5.5)
	UNN	6 (3)
	CON.Jalingo	1 (0.5)
	SOH.Obosi	1 (0.5)
	SOH.Amachara	9 (4.5)
	Open University	2 (1.2)
	SOM.Mkar.Gboko	1 (0.5)
Didn't Specify	26 (12.9)	

Table2. Distribution of responses of participants to questions in awareness

Question	Response	f (%)
Are you familiar with the word physiotherapy?	Yes	201 (100)
Are you aware of the existence of physiotherapy in Nigeria?	Yes	199 (99)
	Not sure	1 (0.5)
	No	1 (0.5)
If yes to No 1, from where did you get the information about physiotherapy?	Hospital	84 (41.8)
	Media	14 (7)
	Physiotherapist	19 (9.5)
	Place of study/ training	137(68.2)
	Treat patients	121 (60.2)
Do you know what physiotherapist do?	Work in fitness center	122 (60.7)
	Work in sports center	36 (17.9)
	Do not know	2 (1)
Do you think you need to know more about physiotherapy?	Yes	186 (92)
	Not sure	13(6.5)

Table3. Distribution on the awareness of places physiotherapists work

Places	Frequency (Percentage)					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Missing
Hospital	185 (92)	16 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Sports centre	105 (52.2)	82 (40.8)	7 (3.5)	5 (2.5)	0 (0)	2 (1)
Schools	65 (32.3)	99 (49.3)	13 (6.5)	18 (9)	2 (1)	4 (2)
Military	101 (50.2)	71 (35.5)	15 (7.5)	8 (4)	3 (1.5)	3 (1.5)
Maternity homes	24 (11.9)	65 (32.3)	57 (28.4)	33 (16.4)	16 (8)	6 (3)
Fitness centers	105 (52.2)	89 (44.3)	2 (1)	1 (0.5)	1 (0.5)	3 (1.5)
Residential homes	45 (22.4)	83 (41.3)	36 (17.9)	25 (12.4)	8 (4)	4 (2)
Primary health	50 (24.9)	62 (30.8)	46 (22.9)	30 (14.9)	11 (5.5)	2 (1)

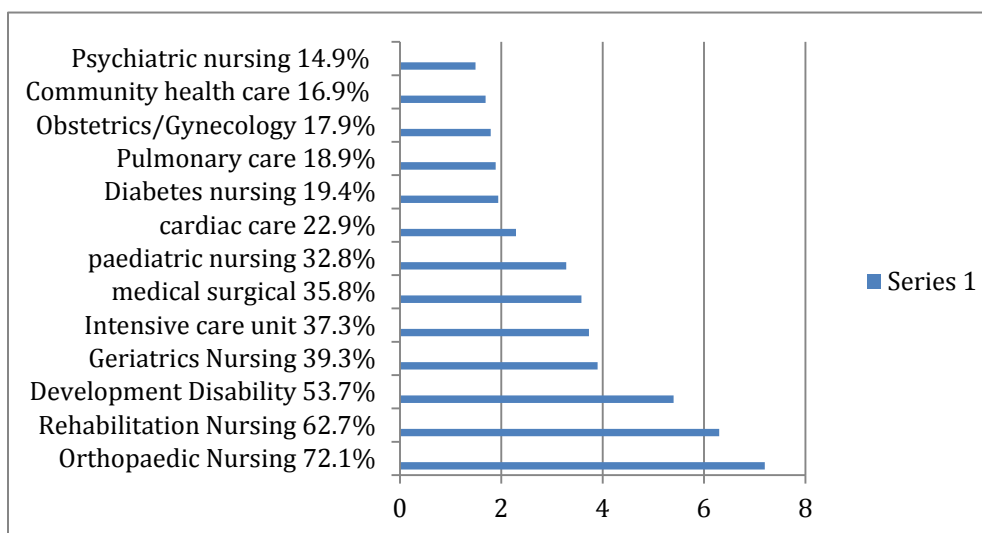


Figure 1: Chart1. Showing how the participants view/perceive on the importance of the role of physiotherapy services in some nurse's specialties.

Table 4: Distribution of responses by participants to questions on the extent of utilization of physiotherapy services

Questions	Variable	F (%)
Does your present hospital have a physiotherapy unit?	Yes	197 (98)
	Not sure	4 (2)
If you do not have physiotherapy unit In your hospital of practice, do you have physiotherapy clinic within the vicinity of your hospital or residence?	Yes	124 (61.7)
	Not sure	21 (10.4)
	No	13 (6.5)
	Missing	43 (21.4)
Physiotherapy services in hospital of practice are rather too expensive.	Yes	72 (35.8)
	Not sure	100 (49.8)
	No	28 (13.9)
Have you worked with a physiotherapist in the management of a patient before?	Missing	1 (0.5)
	Yes	107 (53.2)
	Not sure	25 (12.4)
Does your place of study/training have a physiotherapy department?	No	69 (34.3)
	Yes	167 (83.1)
	Not sure	19 (9.5)
Do you have a physiotherapist friend?	No	15 (7.5)
	Yes	129 (64.2)
	Not sure	11 (5.5)
If you have referred patients to physiotherapy, where did you refer to?	No	60 (29.9)
	Missing	1 (0.5)
	Private physiotherapy clinic	23(11.4)
	Private physiotherapist	51(25.4)
What is the mode of referral to them?	Federal/General/State hospitals	118 (58.7)
	Missing	9 (4.5)
	With prescription	100 (49.8)
	Without prescription	92 (45.8)
	Missing	9 (4.5)

Awareness of the participants on physiotherapy services

All the participants were familiar with physiotherapy while 99% were aware of the existence of physiotherapy in Nigeria (table 2). Many of the participants (60.7%) knew that physiotherapists work in fitness center and 68.2% of the participants got their information about physiotherapy from their place of study/ training (table 2). Majority of the participants (92.5%) thought that they need to know more about physiotherapy while, 92% of the participants strongly agreed that they were aware physiotherapists work in hospital and 28.4% of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed that physiotherapists work in maternity homes (table 3).

Orthopedic nursing and Rehabilitation nursing specialties had the highest percent of the participants strongly agreeing that physiotherapy is important in these specialties, 72.1% and 62.7% respectively. Only about 14.9% strongly agreed that physiotherapy was important in psychiatric nursing specialty. All the participants reported that physiotherapists play important roles in stroke, muscle weakness and movement problems (Chart 1).

It was observed that 53.2% of the participants had worked with the physiotherapist in the management of a patient and 34.3% have not work with a physiotherapist before. Majority of the participants (58.7%) referred their patients to Federal/General/State hospitals, while 25.4% and 11.4% referred their patients to private physiotherapist and private physiotherapy clinic respectively. Only about 49.8% of the total participants referred their patients to physiotherapist with prescription while about 45.8% referred their patients to physiotherapist without prescription. (Table 4 below shows the utilization of physiotherapy services by nurses).

DISCUSSION

According to the findings of this study, nurses were found to have a good level of awareness on the role of physiotherapy services, in that, all the participants reported that they were familiar with the word physiotherapy and were aware of its existence in Nigeria. A fairly large participant of 60.7% and 60.2% reported that what they knew physiotherapists do is to work in fitness centers and treat patients respectively, with 17.9% reporting that physiotherapists work in sports centers despite their agreement that physiotherapists mostly work in hospitals, thereby not effectively corresponding with their knowledge on what physiotherapists do. However majority of the participants thought that they need to know more about physiotherapy. The finding of this study is similar to a related study by Maruf et al, (2012), who

found out that an overwhelming majority of adult residents in Nnewi, South-Eastern Nigeria, thought that they needed to know more about physiotherapy. The reason for this inadequate knowledge about physiotherapy may be because majority of the participants got information about physiotherapy from their places of study/training and hospitals, with only 9.5% of participants who got their information directly from physiotherapist themselves. The information the former obtained may likely be devoid of vital details about physiotherapy. Thus, this finding should motivate the professional body and Nigeria physiotherapists to augment their efforts in creating awareness about physiotherapy.

Present career status was also found to influence the awareness level of nurses. Senior and Principal Nursing Officers were found to have good awareness level than Nursing Officers (i) and Nursing Officer (ii) and this is however not surprising as Senior and Principal Nursing Officers have more exposure in study/training and in practice. Nevertheless, in this study most participants reported to have good level of awareness of the word physiotherapy. This is not surprising since being aware facilitates usage. Probably if inter-professional education is encouraged more within health care teams, it may lead to more utilization of Physiotherapy services by these health care teams and nurses.

The result further showed that there was a fair agreement of nurses in their view on the importance of physiotherapy services in intensive care unit (critical care), cardiac care, pulmonary care, diabetes nursing, obstetrics (midwifery)/gynecology, community health care and psychiatric nursing, and a good agreement on importance view in geriatrics nursing, medical-surgical (pre and post-surgical), orthopedics nursing, pediatrics nursing, rehabilitation nursing and developmental disability nursing. The participants had adequate view of the importance of physiotherapy roles in musculoskeletal, sports and neurological (stroke) dysfunction but limited importance view to field of cardiovascular and pulmonary dysfunction, (cardiac and pulmonary care), gynecology and obstetrics care, and pediatric problems such as, child abnormal conditions and child developmental delays. This shows that nurses had not been working with physiotherapists in management of these conditions and nurses also perceived the role of physiotherapists as being concerned with mobility and movement, and valued their skills only in these areas. This finding is similar with a related study by Devanshi et al, (2017), which reported a limited level of awareness of physiotherapy roles in cardiovascular and pulmonary dysfunctions, women's health, or following pregnancy and gynecological/ obstetric disorders hence patients with these disorders whose quality of life should have been improved by receiving physiotherapy services are not opportuned because they are not referred for

physiotherapy. Contrary to this finding, Zainab et al, (2016) in their study found that majority of nurses and physicians in Saudi Arabia believed that physiotherapists had the expertise to be involved in respiratory care and that they are important members of the Intensive care unit. The findings of this study is in agreement to Devanshi et al, (2017) but contrary to Zainab et al (2016) this could be to the fact that in Nigeria, physiotherapy practice as first contact is not common as opposed to what is obtainable in Saudi Arabia, which is a more developed country than the former (Maruf et al, 2013). This nature of access to physiotherapy services in Nigeria may overshadow the existence of physiotherapy and thus limit (Maruf et al, 2012) its importance view among nurses. This could be a possible explanation why only about half of the study participants perceived physiotherapy as being important, this further substantiate the need to query the quality of information nurses obtained from third parties in the course of their work/training on physiotherapy as reported by majority of the study participants. More so, present career status was found to significantly influence the importance view. Senior and Principal Nursing Officers were found to demonstrate better importance view than Nursing Officers (i) and Nursing Officers (ii). This agreed with a related study by Odunaiya et al, (2013), who reported that consultants tend to be more aware and had better knowledge than senior registrars about the role of physiotherapy in obstetrics and gynecology. This might be as a result that, Senior and Principal Nursing Officers and Consultants had longer years in study/training and many years of practice, in which they garnered enhanced experience and better inter-professional relationship. It was also found that statistically, importance have significant correlation with awareness and utilization. This implies that if nurses are better informed about physiotherapy services, this will increase how important they perceived these services hence confers greater utilization for the benefit of the patients who is in fact the main focus.

Nursing officers (i) were observed to show a better utilization of physiotherapy services than the Senior and Principal Nursing Officers, and Nursing Officers (ii) in patient management, despite their view in the importance and awareness of physiotherapy services. This maybe because Nursing officers (i) are more directly involved in provision of nursing care for patients while the Senior and Principal Nursing Officers are more concerned with administrative duties. All the results from this study portrayed the dire need for physiotherapists to educate other healthcare professionals including nurses about their profession. This is because being fully aware (quality information) of physiotherapy and the services offered can increase how important these services are perceived hence may confer increased utilization.

LIMITATION

The limitation in this study was the noninvolvement of Assistant Chief Nursing officers, Chief Nursing officers, Assistant Directors, Deputy Directors and Directors, even though they might constitute a negligible proportion.

CONCLUSION

Nurses in tertiary hospitals in Anambra state portrayed a good awareness level of physiotherapy services, but majority of them indicated that they needed to be enlightened more on the roles of physiotherapy services. There is however the need to raise awareness of the importance of physiotherapy services among nurses.

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