

LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Community Physiotherapy in India: Status Quo?

Community health services in India have played a major role in the prevention and treatment of chronic health conditions like cystic fibrosis (Byrne and Hardy, 2005), stroke (Young, 1994), and knee arthritis (Hay et al, 2006), among others. Community physiotherapy, an important component of community health services, is an underrated and less “attractive” profession (Rajan, 2012, 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2017). When I was as an undergraduate physiotherapy student in 2002, in India, community physiotherapy was not considered a lucrative profession. Nevertheless, I felt drawn to this area of specialisation and have been working as a community physiotherapy clinician and researcher ever since graduation.

In the year 2015, I had the privilege of being invited to speak at an international conference in Gujarat, India. An opportunity arose to interact with the postgraduate physiotherapy students in an institution there. A questionnaire survey study was conducted to understand the motivations behind their choice of specialisation. Twenty-one female physiotherapists agreed to participate in the study. Their average age was 23.76 ± 1.09 years, and thirteen of them were in their final (second) year of study. Only seven students had taken up physiotherapy studies as their first choice, while the remaining were either interested in other areas of specialisation such as medicine and dentistry ($n=11$) or were not aware of the profession ($n=3$). There were only four physiotherapists whose postgraduate specialisation was in community physiotherapy. Upon further enquiry, it emerged that community physiotherapy was perceived as a profession that has “*limited awareness among the general population*” (P5) and “*has no value in India*” (P6). Despite these perceptions, this area of specialisation was considered as “*the best profession to serve people*” (P3), and with “*great scope in the community, both as a preventive as well as curative service*” (P4). Although a small cohort, the findings from this study reiterate the lack of awareness and interest among physiotherapists in India to pursue this specialisation.

Over these many years, the field of community physiotherapy has not gained much importance and attention in India (Johnsey et al, 2013; Rajan, 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2017). Community physiotherapy has immense potential to prevent and treat public health conditions. Improving the awareness and interest of

physiotherapists and the general population (Johnsey et al, 2013; Sinha and Sharma, 2019) in this area of specialisation is the key to the success of community physiotherapy.

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