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The incidence and nature of work related musculoskeletal injuries amongst physiotherapists, in South Africa, Gauteng province

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Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WRMSDs) are a substantial part of injury burden in the field of Physiotherapy. A mixed methods sequential explanatory design comprising two phases was conducted. Phase-one demographics of participants were as follows: The mean age of participants was 37±9.29 years; the youngest was 25 years and the oldest 67 years old. Approximately, two thirds (64%) had a normal BMI and 87.8% were female. Physiotherapists (PTs) reported that they have sustained WRMSDs (n=98) and are A-type personalities. Work related pain among physiotherapist was more prevalent on the lower back (41.8%), thumb and fingers (27.6%), cervical/neck (24.5%), wrist and hand (20.4%) and shoulder (18.4%). Eighteen physiotherapists who sustained WRMSDs participated in phase two qualitative in-depth interview and data saturation was reached. Four themes that emerged were: factors of injury, management, culture of physiotherapists and future direction. PTs admitted that they feel guilty to take time off from work and would rather work through the pain and discomfort. Physiotherapy culture revealed denial regarding a predisposition to WRMSDs. Almost all the PTs in this study stated that they put their patients first. Most PTs do not report injuries, or take time off work, or see a doctor. Majority of physiotherapists self-treat or ask colleagues to do 5-10 minutes treatment. Many PTs leave the profession or cease clinical practice relatively early in their career. Deeper insight into the mind set and perception of physiotherapists was gained. Recommendations for injury prevention and sustainable clinical practice were postulated.

Biography

Nadia Latib is a Masters candidate at Sefako Magatho University, currently a Junior Lecturer at the same institute. She is currently the owner of a private practice and specializes in orthopedics, rehabilitation, sports injuries and musculoskeletal disorders. She is involved in community projects, where she advises, facilitates presentations and prescribes exercises to the senior citizens club, the grandfathers club and the cancer care association in her community.

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