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An exploratory study of patients' and physiotherapists' preferences when making decisions and sharing information about managing low back pain in Saudi Arabia

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Statement of the Problem: Involving patients in making decisions about the management of health conditions enables clinicians (including physiotherapists) and patients to deliberate about options and share information about the clinical situation; this may help to improve patients' adherence and self-control over their illnesses. Low back pain (LBP) is a common and debilitating problem often managed by physiotherapists. The preferences of these patients and physiotherapists for involvement in decision making and, more specifically, those of patients and physiotherapists in Arabian cultures such as Saudi Arabia is largely unknown. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and preferences of physiotherapists and patients with LBP for patient involvement in decision making and information provision.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A cross-sectional study was conducted, in Saudi Arabia, with patients with LBP (n=296) and physiotherapists (n=93) using self-completion questionnaires developed for this study. Chi-square tests in addition to ordinal logistic regression modelling were conducted to identify associations and differences within groups of participants.

Findings: Most patients preferred to adopt a more passive role in decision making within the clinical setting, but wished to share decisions about aspects occurring elsewhere (e.g., routine daily activities and home management programs). Patients' demographic and LBP characteristics were generally significantly associated with their preferences (p<0.001-0.05). Physiotherapists were generally paternalistic in their approach to decision making.

Conclusion & Significance: These findings provide information on which to base future studies to investigate the possible effect of preferences on treatment outcomes and the long term 'self-management' of LBP.

Table: Percentages of Patients' & Physiotherapists' Preferences Regarding What Should Be Done To Decide

CONDITION	Total Number of PT	Total Number of PE	Patients (n=296)			The physiotherapists (n=93)		The Physiotherapists of other				
			PT	PE	PE	PT	PE	PT	PE			
Deciding/relating routine daily activities	235	91	13	6.5	9	7.7	26	28.5	24	27.8	15	1.2
Readiness to carry out routine daily activities	235	91	14	5.5	15	8.8	31	34.3	15	16.2	17	1.8
Type of treatment	231	91	2	0	8	3	23	25	32	35.8	45	50.6
Doing home management program	231	91	5	2.2	8	3.8	30	33.3	34	38	34	35.2
Visit frequency	231	91	3	1.3	3	1.2	30	33.3	29	32.8	36	37.8
Amount of expenditure	235	91	4	1.7	4	1.4	27	29.1	33	35.8	38	40.2
Consulting more senior physiotherapist	231	91	11	3.2	17	5	24	26.1	25	27.8	34	36.8
Referring back to treating physician	235	91	18	6.1	25	7.2	35	38.7	25	27.8	37	39
Discharged from physiotherapy services	231	91	7	2.4	5	1.7	32	35.7	23	25.8	36	38.7

PT: Patients with LBP, PE: Physiotherapists

Biography

Wafa AlKhatrawi has her expertise in Physiotherapy for more than twenty years, in Saudi Arabia. She graduated in 1996 as a certified professional Physiotherapist (King Saud University, Riyadh), and then completed her Master's degree in Pediatric Physiotherapy, in 2004. She then finished her PhD at King's College London, London, United Kingdom (2013) with an interest in collaborative clinical decision making and patient centered care.

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