

## Learning experiences of physiotherapy students attending their clinical placement in a public sector university

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**Objective:** To explore the learning experience of physiotherapy students attending their clinical placement in Dow University of Health Sciences.

**Methodology:** This cross-sectional study was carried out among undergraduate physiotherapy students at institute of physical medicine and rehabilitation, Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi from July to August, 2019. Stratified sampling technique was used for recruitment of 240 students out of which 222 students participated in the study. Self- designed questionnaire was used and data were analyzed through SPSS version 21.

**Results:** Out of 222 students, there were 196(88.3%) females and 26(11.7%) males with mean age  $22.18 \pm 1.168$  years. We found that 107(48.2%) and 52(23.5%) students are somewhat and very satisfied for learning form clinical placement, respectively.

**Conclusion:** Most of the physiotherapy students were satisfied with their clinical placement. There is still requirement to provide them good clinical environment for their better learning. (Rawal Med J 202;46:123-126).

**Keywords:** Clinical placement, rehabilitation, teaching rounds.

### INTRODUCTION

Clinical placements provide a great chance to acquire knowledge for physiotherapy students.<sup>1</sup> In Australia, after medicine and nursing, the physiotherapy staff is the huge contributor to health management. The students classify this as a highly productive learning experience, because it gives a chance to students for patient contact.<sup>2</sup> Clinical guidance is the main constituent in physical therapy and it is necessary to generate the clinical abilities and attitudes.<sup>3</sup> Placement in clinics provides opportunities for students to dynamically increase and integrate their theoretical and practical skills.<sup>4,5</sup> Increase in physiotherapy students enrolment reduces clinical placement chance and quality of experiences for students to reach their requirement.<sup>6,7</sup> It is most appropriate for physiotherapy students to practice the integration and application of understanding, competence and professional behaviour prior to change in clinical environment within the study program.<sup>8</sup>

It is essential for health care provider to learn from experience to reflect on event and find where the information fits in association to their prior

experience, knowledge and expertise.<sup>9</sup> Encouraging learning environment is the way in which students easily engage in practice.<sup>10</sup> In the starting of clinical experience, anxiety creating conditions occur due to unknown area, absence of clinical expertise and worry of making mistakes.<sup>11</sup> Thinking of clinician and senior students are dissimilar from those who are starting their clinical placement.<sup>12</sup> For effectively transformation to working and learning in clinical setting immersive stimulation base clinical practice is helpful.<sup>13</sup>

The physiotherapy clinics are that place where the student have more chances to learn and explore themselves with patients.<sup>14</sup> There is still need for evidence in developing countries to know the worth of clinical learning experiences of physiotherapy student. So, the purpose of this study was to observe the clinical learning experience in physiotherapy students.

### METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional survey was conducted at Department of Physiotherapy, Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (IPM&R), Dow

University of Health Science, Karachi, Pakistan after approval from Institutional Review Board of the university (IRB-1233/DUHS/Approval/2019/66). A written informed consent was taken from all participants. The duration of the study was between June and August 2019. This sample size of 240 was calculated using WHO online software OpenEpi version 3. The hypothesized frequency of 80.7% (in coping strategies student take time to reflect on life and stay aware of important things), the confidence limit of 5% and design effect of 1% was taken.<sup>14</sup>

Stratified random sampling was done with defining fifth, fourth and third academic years as subgroup from the list of enrolled 395 students from sessions 2015 to 2017. About 26.1%, 38.7% and 35.2% of this sample frame were enrolled in 5<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> academic year, respectively. Then the simple random sampling was done through fishbowl method for recruitment of same proportions of sample size in each academic year.<sup>15</sup> Study inclusion criteria were 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year physiotherapy students with age from 20 years to 25 years. The students with clinical rotation attendance below 40% were excluded from the study.

A self-designed questionnaire was used which was extracted from previous literature.<sup>2,14</sup> Two assistant professors of physiotherapy evaluated whether the questions will effectively capture the topic under

investigation. Then, the questionnaire was pretested, and its questions were rechecked and were made more understandable according to the students. The questionnaire consists of a demographic data along with total 20 questions. Questions were regarding area of clinical placement, satisfaction level and beliefs about learning experiences from clinical rotation. Those question were with 4-point liker scale (very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied, very satisfied) along with open ended comment. The questions related to beliefs were 5-point liker scale (never true of me, somewhat true of me, half the time true of me, frequently true of me, always true of me).<sup>2,14</sup> Time duration for filling the questionnaire was 5 to 10 minutes.

**Statistical Analysis:** For data analysis SPSS version 21 was used. The results were presented in form of frequency and percentages.

## RESULTS

Out of 222 students, there were 196(88.3%) females and 26(11.7%) males with mean age  $22.18 \pm 1.168$  years. Most respondents had completed a placement in cardiopulmonary 39.2%, musculoskeletal 28.8% and gynecology 24.8%. The perceived satisfaction level to questions is given in Table 1. Believes about their learning experiences are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 1. Responses to satisfaction of learning experiences.**

Items	very dissatisfied f(%)n=222	somewhat dissatisfied f(%)n=222	somewhat satisfied f(%)n=222	very satisfied f(%)n=222
Satisfaction from clinical placement	12(5.4%)	51(23%)	107(48.2%)	52(23.5%)
Satisfaction of time spent with patients	14(6.4%)	59(26.6%)	98(44.2%)	51(23%)
Satisfaction of time spent working individually	22(10%)	68(30.7%)	97(43.75%)	35(15.85%)
Satisfaction of time spent with facility clinical educator	15(6.8%)	44(19.8%)	98(44.2%)	65(29.3%)
Satisfaction of feedback received from facility clinical educator	18(8.2%)	49(22.1%)	91(41%)	64(28.9%)
Satisfaction of individual attention received from facility clinical educator	23(10.4%)	50(22.6%)	95(42.8%)	54(24.3%)

**Table 2. Frequencies and percentages for responses to beliefs about learning experience.**

<b>Items</b>	<b>1 f (%) n=222</b>	<b>2 f (%) n=222</b>	<b>3 f (%) n=222</b>	<b>4 f (%) n=222</b>	<b>5 f (%) n=222</b>
Complete enough work to form own conclusion	3(1.4)	55(24.8)	57(25.7)	66(29.7)	41(18.5)
Pass the placement with little possible work.	95(42.8)	56(25.2)	32(14.4)	30(13.5)	9(4.1)
Studies recommended topics seriously	19(8.6)	51(23.0)	40(18)	70(31.5)	42(18.9)
Once get into a topic it would be highly interesting	4(1.8)	22(9.9)	31(14)	79(35.6)	86(38.7)
Spend extra time to obtain more information for new topics	7(3.2)	53(23.9)	48(21.6)	59(26.6)	55(24.8)
Do minimum work, when finds placement is not interesting	37(16.7)	59(26.6)	46(20.7)	42(18.9)	38(17.1)
Sometimes find academic topics as exciting as a good novel	39(17.6)	49(22.1)	59(26.6)	45(20.3)	30(13.5)
If placement is interesting, work hard for studies	8(3.6)	17(7.7)	16(7.2)	71(32.0)	110(49.4)
Use to find out more about discussed interesting topics during leisure	31(14.0)	58(26.1)	59(26.6)	48(21.6)	26(11.7)
Just passing the placement does not help in deep study	97(43.7)	61(27.5)	33(14.9)	24(10.8)	7(3.2)
Placement supervisors should not expect from students to spend more time on rotation because everyone would not be assessed	48(21.6)	59(26.6)	65(29.3)	35(15.8)	15(6.8)
Remember answers to likely questions is the best way to pass the clinical placement	31(14.0)	39(17.6)	50(22.5)	72(32.4)	30(13.5)
I ask for help from my supervisor when I have any problem during placement	30(13.5)	39(17.6)	46(20.7)	61(27.5)	46(20.7)

Note: 1= Never true for me, 2= Sometimes true for me, 3= Half the time true for me, 4= frequently true for me, 5= Always true for me, Frequency= f, Percentage =%.

## DISCUSSION

The main findings of this study were that more than half of the students highlighted they are satisfied from their clinical placement with positive beliefs. Katrine and colleagues conducted a study in 2012 and made conclusion that students who are with one supervisor were very satisfied, but that study was conducted among undergraduate student enrolled in four years academic program.<sup>2</sup> However, the present study was conducted among five-year graduation program, Doctor of Physiotherapy. The results of present study suggest more than 50% students are satisfied with the clinical placement. In the present study, some students (33%) responded about very

and somewhat dissatisfaction with time spent with patients. These findings are same as results of previous study.<sup>2</sup>

Aziz and colleagues in 2018 concluded in a study that feedback of teacher or supervisor is most crucial for the students learning. In terms of learning clinical teaching environment plays a major role. Students learn more in approachable environment that permitted them to work individually according to their needs.<sup>3</sup> The present study suggests overall more than half students are satisfied with the amount of feedback and individual attention they got from clinical educator.

However, in a cross-sectional study conducted by

Kaseke and colleagues in 2014, findings suggested that 41.3% students disagreed with response provided by supervisor and clinical placement experiences. Those responses were varied and based on positive and negative perception of the clinical supervision. The sample size of that study also included the other health sciences students.<sup>14</sup>

Limitation in this study arises from the fact that the study design was cross-sectional being a snap shot for certain time. Simple random sampling was done that caused sample units to be dropped out, scattered and hard to accessible due to their absence. This study is limited to the undergraduate physiotherapy students of Dow university of Health Sciences.

## CONCLUSION

This study suggests that most of the physiotherapy students are satisfied with their clinical learning experience. But there is still need to enhance the feasibility of students to facilitate them and provide with better clinical environment.

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Collection and assembly of data: Prinka Sukheja, Madiha Shabbir, Abida Parveen, Aftab Ahmed Mirza Baig  
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**Conflict of Interest:** None declared  
Rec. Date: Sep 16, 2019 Revision Rec. Date: Sep 30, 2020 Accept Date: Feb 9, 2021

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