Cureus

How do Italian physiotherapists deal with the Pain topics? An independently formulated questionnaire to find out where we stand

Leonardo Schwarz [1]

1. Master in "Physiotherapy for pain management", Fachhochschule Berna, Bolzano, ITA

Corresponding author: Leonardo Schwarz, leonardoschwarz3@gmail.com

How to cite this abstract

Abstract

Background: In 2018, Italy was ranked 3rd in Europe for the percentage of the population with chronic pain, reaching 26%. (SIF, 2018).), with an estimated cost in 2010 of €300 billion. It is evident that chronic pain has a considerable clinical, social and economic impact. However, pain is necessary to the human being, it is vital, but it can become a disease, which disrupts life. Those who suffer must be respected, listened to and helped. The profession of physiotherapist is by nature dedicated to people who suffer, so how do physiotherapists relate to their patients?

The aim of this thesis, inspired by the book "Explain Pain" (Moseley and Butler), and the PNE (Clarke CL, Ryan CG, Martin DJ. 2011) was to investigate physiotherapists's knowledge in Italy about pain through a self-formulated questionnaire.

Materials and methods: Databases used: MEDline, PubMed, PEDro, The Cochrane Library, ScienceDirect, Elsevier. Recognised textbooks: IASP, EFIC and AISD.

Inclusion filters: meta-analyses, systematic reviews and RCT studies;

Filter '10 years' for publication date.

Time period of the research between 03/2020 and 10/2020.

The questionnaire was distributed with "Google Forms" between September and October 2020, through A.I.F.I. to physiotherapists in Italian facilities, both public and private, absolutely anonymous.

There were 30 questions: general on pain, its neurophysiology and more specific questions on Low Back Pain and Osteoarthrosis, multiple choice between 4-6 possible answers and with only one right answer. The score range varies between 0-29.

Results: 198 physiotherapists participated. Using IBM SPSS statistical software, score comparisons were carried out with the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test, post-hoc multiple comparisons (Dunn's test), considering a $p < 0.05$ to be statistically significant.

The data showed an average of correct answers of no more than 15.1 points out of 29 points, 0.6 points more than half of the obtainable points, a median of 15 points congruent with the mean distribution. The division of the items according to the % correct answers showed, congruent with the average of the points obtained, that about half scored below 50% correct answers.

The knowledge between the groups < 15 and > 15 years since the completion of the physiotherapy's Bachelor was inversely proportional, with a significant difference with p-value < 0.05. The 0-5 group, most recently completed studies, scored no higher than 18 points (median) out of 29.

Conclusions: Pain's knowledge among physiotherapists, tested with the questionnaire, has a non-negligible room for improvement, both in the latest neurophysiological topics and in basic concepts fundamental to the interpretation of pain. They are inversely proportional to the years elapsed since the completion of the physiotherapy's Bachelor. Uncertainties also emerge among those who have completed their studies 0-5 years ago, which could reflect the need for more in-depth study of the pain in the University curriculum.

Limitations of the study: self-formulated questionnaire, unverified questionnaire, bias in the research methodology.