How Adequate is the Knowledge of Pakistani Health Care Professionals (HCPs) About Disability? A Nationwide Cross Sectional Survey

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Abstract

Background: Disability related research in Pakistan is limited and there is no information on knowledge of health care professionals towards disability.

Objective: To assess the knowledge of Pakistani HCPs towards disability and Rehabilitation Medicine using a structured questionnaire.

Methods: A self-administered four item questionnaire was constructed and pilot tested before being distributed among 450 HCPs across Pakistan. The HCPs included physicians, nurses and allied health care professionals having a work experience of at least six months. Response rate was 90% .381 forms were analyzed and descriptive statistics were performed.

Results: The majority of the respondents were females (56.2%), physicians (80%), working in public/military hospitals (77%) and had a professional work experience between 1- 10 years (68.5%). The majority of the respondents (94.2%) had contact with a person with disability (as a patient, colleague or a family member). One third (129) of the respondents correctly took name two or more famous national/international disabled persons. Most (78.2%) of the respondents named "Rehabilitation Medicine Physician" as the most appropriate person to treat physical disabilities followed by physiotherapist (16%). When asked to describe Rehabilitation Medicine, most of the respondents answered, multidisciplinary (80.6%) followed by physiotherapy (9.1%) and exercises (3.7%).

Conclusions: General knowledge and awareness regarding disability and PWD among Pakistani HCPs as assessed by this four item questionnaire is adequate in some domains and poor in others. Disability awareness should part of the under and post graduate curriculum for all HCPs. Disability legislation should be implemented. The PWD support groups and organizations need to be more vocal and proactive in their efforts to fight mobility barriers and social stigmatization.

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