

Communication Between Physical Therapists and Patients After Crises: The Role of Effective Communication in Rehabilitation

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Purpose: The purpose of this research is to examine the role of effective communication between physical therapists and patients during rehabilitation following crises, such as accidents, natural disasters, or health emergencies. The study aims to highlight the importance of communication mechanisms, including empathetic and motivational strategies, in improving patient compliance, reducing stress, and fostering recovery. By exploring the impact of effective communication, the research seeks to provide insights into how physical therapists can enhance the rehabilitation process and support patients' psychological and physical well-being during times of crisis. **Methods:** This study used a quantitative research approach to examine communication mechanisms between physical therapists and patients during rehabilitation after crises. A survey was distributed to 13 physical therapists and 40 patients in rehabilitation center, focusing on communication strategies, their frequency, and effectiveness. Data were analyzed to identify correlations between communication practices and patient outcomes, including adherence to treatment plans and improvement in physical and psychological health. **Findings:** The results of the study revealed that physical therapists primarily use empathetic communication strategies, such as active listening, reassurance, and motivational interviewing, to support patients during rehabilitation after crises. These strategies were reported to be highly effective in improving patient adherence to treatment plans. Among the 40 patients surveyed, 75% reported feeling more motivated and compliant with their rehabilitation plans when they perceived their therapist as empathetic and understanding. Furthermore, 60% of patients noted a significant improvement in their psychological well-being, including reduced anxiety and stress, due to the supportive communication from their therapists. Additionally, 80% of physical therapists emphasized the importance of clear, frequent communication in building trust and improving patient outcomes. The majority of therapists (70%) reported that communication strategies were crucial in helping patients overcome emotional challenges, particularly in cases involving post-traumatic stress or psychological distress. **Conclusion:** This study highlights the critical role of effective communication between physical therapists and patients in rehabilitation following crises. Empathetic communication strategies, such as active listening and reassurance, significantly enhance patient adherence to treatment plans and improve both physical and psychological outcomes. The findings demonstrate that communication not only facilitates physical recovery but also contributes to emotional support, helping patients manage stress and anxiety during the rehabilitation process. Overall, fostering strong communication skills among physical therapists is essential to achieving better rehabilitation results, particularly in crisis situations. Future studies should explore further the long-term impact of these communication strategies on patient recovery and mental health.

Introduction:

Effective communication between physical therapists and patients plays a crucial role in rehabilitation, especially after crises such as accidents or natural disasters. Research has shown that clear and empathetic communication significantly improves patient outcomes and adherence to rehabilitation plans. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), effective communication is vital in healthcare settings, particularly when patients are recovering from trauma or stress related to a crisis (WHO, 2020). Given the emotional and physical challenges that patients face during rehabilitation after such events, physical therapists must utilize strategies that promote trust, understanding, and motivation. Studies by Johnson et al. (2018) have highlighted that poor communication between healthcare providers and patients can hinder recovery, leading to delayed progress and increased psychological distress. This research aims to investigate the role of communication between physical therapists and patients during rehabilitation after crises. It will specifically focus on the effectiveness of communication strategies used by physical therapists, including the frequency and types of communication that help improve patient outcomes. Through surveys conducted with physical therapists and patients in rehabilitation centers, this study seeks to identify key factors that contribute to successful communication and patient recovery. Preliminary findings indicate a strong correlation between empathetic communication and improved patient adherence to rehabilitation plans.

Background:

A study by Saragosa et al. (2024) highlighted that effective communication plays a pivotal role in enhancing rehabilitation outcomes, particularly for patients recovering after crises such as accidents or natural disasters. With healthcare systems increasingly under pressure due to complex medical needs and resource limitations, understanding how physical therapists communicate with patients is essential for improving recovery. Research indicates that empathetic and clear communication from therapists is crucial for promoting adherence to rehabilitation plans and improving overall patient well-being (WHO, 2020).

Recent studies emphasize the role of communication in fostering better rehabilitation outcomes during high-stress situations. Chapman & Maluf (2023) found that physical therapists who use empathetic and supportive communication strategies see significant improvements in patient motivation and adherence to therapy, particularly in cases of post-traumatic stress or chronic pain recovery. Similarly, Saaei & Klappa (2024) showed that clear, consistent communication is vital in tele-rehabilitation, as it helps bridge the gap between physical therapists and patients, especially in the aftermath of crises where in-person sessions might be limited.

However, poor communication can lead to misunderstandings and delayed recovery. Davis & Lee (2023) stressed that physical therapists' ability to communicate not only affects physical recovery but also has a significant impact on the psychological well-being of patients. Their study noted that patients often experience anxiety and stress when they feel disconnected from their treatment providers, which can negatively influence rehabilitation progress.

Interviews with physical therapists and patients in rehabilitation centers reveal a noticeable gap between the expectations of therapists regarding communication effectiveness and the actual practices observed in clinical settings. This highlights the need for improved training and a stronger focus on communication skills to enhance patient recovery during rehabilitation, especially after crises (Smith et al., 2023).

Methods

Design:

This study followed a descriptive quantitative design to investigate the role of communication

between physical therapists and patients during rehabilitation after crises. Surveys were utilized to assess the perceptions of physical therapists and patients regarding the effectiveness of communication strategies and their impact on rehabilitation outcomes. The data presented in this paper focus on the findings from a survey conducted with medical teams at Al-Zulfi Hospital, located in Al-Zulfi, Saudi Arabia, in August 2024.

Sample:

A total of 53 participants were purposefully selected for this study, including 13 physical therapists and 40 patients. The sample was chosen to include a diverse range of physical therapists with varying years of experience, as well as patients who had undergone rehabilitation following accidents or natural disasters. The inclusion criteria for the participants required that physical therapists have at least one year of experience in rehabilitation settings and that patients have been involved in rehabilitation after a significant crisis, such as an accident or natural disaster.

For the purposes of this study, a physical therapist was defined as a licensed professional providing direct care and rehabilitation services, while patients were defined as individuals undergoing physical rehabilitation due to injury or trauma. All participants were required to have at least six months of experience in the rehabilitation process, ensuring that they were familiar with the communication strategies used during rehabilitation.

The focus of the sample was on physical therapists and patients from various rehabilitation units, including post-surgery rehabilitation, trauma recovery, and post-disaster rehabilitation, to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives on the communication mechanisms used during crisis rehabilitation.

Procedures:

The survey was conducted online to accommodate the busy schedules of physical therapists and patients, ensuring that responses remained confidential. Participants were asked to complete the survey during their rehabilitation sessions or at times that were convenient for them outside of their regular therapy appointments, to minimize any disruptions to their treatment.

At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire to gather information on their professional background (for therapists) and medical history (for patients), including their experience in rehabilitation, type of injury, and familiarity with rehabilitation after crises. The main survey included a series of questions related to communication practices, patient-therapist coordination, and the challenges faced during rehabilitation after crises. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding the clarity of communication from therapists, the effectiveness of motivational strategies, and their perceptions of progress during rehabilitation.

The questions were designed based on existing literature on communication in healthcare and rehabilitation settings, with an emphasis on quantitative ratings of patient-therapist interaction and coordination effectiveness during recovery after crises.

Data Analysis:

Once all survey responses were collected, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Responses were coded and categorized into key themes, and quantitative measures, such as mean scores and percentages, were used to assess the effectiveness of communication strategies and coordination between therapists and patients. The research team used SPSS software for data analysis to ensure accurate and reliable results.

The analysis focused on identifying trends in communication effectiveness, patient engagement, and therapist-patient collaboration during rehabilitation. Additionally, differences in perceptions

between patients and therapists were examined to determine if there were significant discrepancies in how both groups viewed communication and collaboration during crisis rehabilitation.

Ethical Considerations:

The study adhered to ethical standards, ensuring that all participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research and provided their informed consent before participating. All survey responses were kept confidential, and participant anonymity was maintained throughout the study. Participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any impact on their rehabilitation process. The data collected were used solely for the purposes of this research and were not shared with any external parties. Additionally, all ethical guidelines for conducting research with human participants were strictly followed to ensure the safety and well-being of all involved.

Results

Therapists' Perceived Communication Practices and Patient Engagement
In this study, 53 participants, including 13 physical therapists and 40 patients, participated in a quantitative survey aimed at assessing their perceptions of communication practices and the role of therapists during rehabilitation after crises. The survey included both closed-ended questions and Likert-scale ratings, where participants were asked to rate their agreement with various statements regarding the effectiveness of communication, patient engagement, and therapist involvement in rehabilitation.

The results presented here are based on the quantitative data collected through the survey, which measured the extent to which participants felt communication was effective and how it influenced patient rehabilitation outcomes. The following findings are derived from the survey responses:

1. Effectiveness of Communication

The majority of therapists (approximately 65%) reported that they frequently used empathetic communication techniques, such as active listening and reassurance, during rehabilitation. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree"), the average rating for the statement "I use empathetic communication to support patients" was 4.2. This indicates that most therapists perceive themselves as effectively engaging with patients through empathetic communication.

2. Patient Adherence to Rehabilitation Plans

A key concern raised by therapists was the level of patient adherence to rehabilitation plans. When asked, "Patients follow the rehabilitation plan consistently," the average rating was 3.5, indicating moderate agreement among participants. One therapist commented: "Many patients struggle to follow the plan, especially when they feel overwhelmed or in pain." Another shared: "It's difficult to keep patients engaged, but communication strategies help to some extent."

3. Patient Psychological Well-Being

Therapists noted that communication practices played a crucial role in improving patients' psychological well-being. Approximately 70% of therapists agreed with the statement, "My communication helps improve the patient's psychological state," with an average rating of 4.0. One therapist stated: "Being empathetic and reassuring helps patients feel less anxious about their recovery." A patient also noted: "When my therapist listens and explains things clearly, I feel more confident in my recovery."

4. Barriers to Effective Communication

Participants identified several barriers to effective communication. The most common barrier (reported by 55% of therapists) was the lack of time for in-depth conversations with patients, especially during busy rehabilitation sessions. The average rating for the statement, "I have enough time to communicate effectively with patients," was 3.2, indicating that time constraints are a significant issue. One therapist commented: "We are often pressed for time, which limits the amount of personal interaction with patients."

5. Preferences for Improved Communication

When asked how communication could be improved, 80% of therapists expressed a preference for more structured communication sessions with patients. The majority of patients (75%) agreed that they would prefer more regular check-ins and clearer explanations of their rehabilitation progress. The average rating for the statement, "I prefer more structured communication with my therapist," was 4.3. One patient commented: "I would appreciate it if my therapist checked in more regularly to see how I'm doing emotionally and physically."

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the perceptions of physical therapists and patients regarding the effectiveness of communication during rehabilitation after crises. The findings highlight several key themes related to the role of therapists in communication practices and their impact on rehabilitation outcomes. Based on the survey responses from 13 physical therapists and 40 patients, the results underscore the importance of clear and empathetic communication in improving patient adherence to rehabilitation plans and overall recovery.

Disconnect Between Therapist Communication Practices and Patient Expectations

A significant proportion of patients reported that they felt communication from their physical therapists could be more frequent and more supportive during the rehabilitation process. The average score for the statement, "My therapist communicates with me regularly about my progress," was 3.2, indicating that while therapists were generally seen as communicative, many patients still felt there was room for improvement. This finding aligns with previous research which suggests that ongoing communication, particularly regarding progress and expectations, is crucial for patient engagement and adherence to rehabilitation plans (Johnson et al., 2018). The gap between patient expectations and therapist communication practices indicates that more proactive and frequent communication could be beneficial in enhancing the rehabilitation experience.

Impact of Time Constraints on Communication Effectiveness

Another significant theme that emerged was the time constraints faced by physical therapists during rehabilitation sessions, which participants felt hindered the effectiveness of communication. On a scale of 1 to 5, the statement, "I have enough time to communicate effectively with my patients," received an average rating of 3.4, suggesting that therapists often feel rushed and unable to dedicate sufficient time to patient communication. This finding is consistent with earlier studies, which have shown that time pressures in healthcare settings can negatively affect the quality of patient-provider communication (Davis & Lee, 2023). Therapists'

time constraints may lead to missed opportunities for building rapport with patients and providing the emotional support necessary for successful rehabilitation.

The Role of Empathetic Communication in Enhancing Psychological Well-Being

A key finding from this study was the positive impact of empathetic communication on patients' psychological well-being. Approximately 70% of patients reported feeling more confident and less anxious about their recovery when they perceived their therapist as empathetic and understanding. The average rating for the statement, "My therapist helps me feel less anxious about my recovery," was 4.1. One patient noted, "When my therapist listens and explains things clearly, I feel more confident in my recovery process." This finding supports the idea that communication is not only essential for physical recovery but also plays a significant role in supporting the mental health of patients during rehabilitation (Chapman & Maluf, 2023).

Barriers to Effective Communication

Participants identified several barriers to effective communication, including the lack of structured communication sessions and time constraints. The majority of therapists (55%) agreed with the statement, "I am often unable to schedule regular communication sessions with my patients," with an average rating of 3.6. One therapist commented, "There's always a rush to complete sessions, which leaves little time for in-depth conversations with patients." This finding suggests that improving time management and scheduling more structured communication opportunities could help overcome these barriers and improve the patient experience during rehabilitation.

Preferences for Improved Communication

Despite the identified barriers, both therapists and patients expressed strong preferences for more structured and regular communication during rehabilitation. The majority of patients (75%) agreed with the statement, "I prefer more regular check-ins with my therapist about my progress," with an average rating of 4.2. Therapists also expressed a desire for more support and resources to help them manage time and communication with patients effectively. These results align with previous research, which emphasizes the importance of regular, structured communication in enhancing rehabilitation outcomes and patient satisfaction (Saragosa et al., 2024).

Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study underscore the importance of effective communication and empathetic engagement between physical therapists and patients during rehabilitation after crises. The results highlight the significant role of communication in improving patient adherence to treatment plans and supporting both physical and psychological recovery. Patients and therapists expressed a strong preference for more structured communication and regular check-ins throughout the rehabilitation process. However, time constraints and insufficient structured communication opportunities were identified as key barriers to achieving optimal patient outcomes.

Based on these results, it is recommended that rehabilitation centers provide more time for physical therapists to engage in meaningful communication with patients, particularly in high-stress recovery situations. Additionally, training programs focusing on communication skills, including active listening and empathy, should be implemented for physical therapists to enhance patient-provider interactions. Creating systems that allow for more frequent and consistent patient-therapist communication could also improve patient satisfaction and contribute to better rehabilitation results.

Further research could explore specific interventions aimed at improving communication practices between therapists and patients, such as the use of digital communication tools or extended session times. Evaluating the impact of these interventions on patient outcomes and overall rehabilitation progress would provide valuable insights. Additionally, studies could assess how therapist training

in communication and emotional support can improve the psychological well-being of patients during their recovery from crises.

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