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Nutritional-Related Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices among Physical Therapists and Physical Therapy Students: A Scoping Review

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - None.

Review Stage at time of this submission - The review has not yet started.

Conflicts of interest - None declared.

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Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 07 August 2024 and was last updated on 07 August 2024.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective This study aims to explore the level of nutritional-related competence among physical therapists and physical therapy students. Therefore, the proposed scoping review will address the following questions:

- What is the level of nutritional-related knowledge among physical therapists and physical therapy students?
- What are the attitudes of physical therapists and physical therapy students toward incorporating nutritional assessment and counseling into their clinical practice?
- What is the level of integration of nutritional assessment and counseling among physical therapists and physical therapy students into their clinical practice?

Background The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) asserts that nutrition issues fall within the scope of professional practice, emphasizing their role in primary, secondary, and

tertiary prevention of conditions managed by physical therapists. (Association, 2019) Consequently, it is recommended that physical therapists (PTs) incorporate nutrition assessment and provide appropriate consultation, recognizing when referral to a registered dietitian is necessary. This recognition underscores the increasing importance of basic dietary counseling as a foundational component of clinical competence for PTs, particularly in the prevention of non-communicable diseases and lifestyle-related chronic conditions. (Abaraogu et al., 2019; O'Donoghue et al., 2014) However, in clinical practice, the integration of nutritional assessment and counseling is often not within the scope of the physical therapy profession. (O'Donoghue et al., 2014).

Rationale Clinical competence among PTs is characterized by a triad of positive attitudes, adequate knowledge, and relevant skills. (Colbert, 2024) Therefore, there is a critical need to explore the current knowledge, practices, and attitudes of

registered PTS and PTs' students regarding the integration of nutrition issues. This includes:

- **Knowledge:** Understanding and familiarity with nutritional concepts, guidelines, and information relevant to physical therapy.
- **Attitudes:** Perceptions, beliefs, and positions regarding the importance and relevance of incorporating nutrition into physical therapy practice. This can include their opinions on the effectiveness of nutritional counseling and their willingness to engage in such practices.
- **Practices:** Actual behaviors and actions related to the integration of nutrition into their professional practice. This includes the extent to which they assess nutritional status, provide nutritional counseling, and collaborate with nutrition professionals.

Existing studies have separately investigated these components, yielding varied results due to methodological differences. To date, no comprehensive scoping review has synthesized this information. Thus, the rationale for conducting this scoping review is to systematically identify and understand the nutritional-related clinical competence of PTs and PTs students'. By aggregating current information on these crucial aspects, this review aims to inform the development of educational programs, policies, and interventions to enhance the role of nutrition in physical therapy and ultimately improve patient outcomes.

METHODS

Strategy of data synthesis This Scoping Review will follow the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses scoping review extension (PRISMA-ScR). Five electronic databases will be searched including: PubMed (National Library of Medicine), CINAHL (EBSCO), APA PsycInfo (EBSCO), Web of Science (Clarivate) and Scopus (Elsevier). Additionally, we will search for gray literature items such as dissertations and theses via ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global as well as conference materials (proceedings, posters, reports). The search strategy will include general keyword terms for each concept and MeSH index terms of the two main concepts of Physical therapy and Nutrition, utilizing combinations of relevant search terms. Reference lists of included articles will be examined for additional potential eligible studies.

Eligibility criteria Studies included must evaluate knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to nutrition and nutritional issues relevant to physical therapy practice/profession (e.g., obesity, osteoarthritis, malnutrition). This includes

subjective and objective measurements of knowledge and attitudes, quantified through qualitative and quantitative means, and practices related to the integration of nutrition into physical therapy. Studies involving other healthcare professionals or focusing on non-nutritional aspects of health promotion are excluded. This review will consider studies conducted in various settings where physical therapists and physical therapy students operate, including academic, clinical, and professional practice environments. Studies focusing on knowledge, attitudes, and practices of health promotion or lifestyle-related conditions (e.g., smoking, physical activity, alcohol consumption) without focusing on nutrition will be excluded. Studies on the effects of nutritional interventions combined with physical therapy treatments on patient outcomes and those on eating disorders (e.g., anorexia, bulimia) are outside the scope of this review.

Source of evidence screening and selection

Two authors will independently search the identified databases and review titles and abstracts according to the criteria described above. If the abstract or title does not provide sufficient details on whether nutritional knowledge/attitude/practice is being tested, the methods section of the manuscript will be read. Reference lists of the identified articles will be manually examined for additional relevant titles. Subsequently, the two authors will review full-text articles considered potentially applicable. In cases of disagreement, consensus will be achieved through discussion with a third reviewer.

Covidence software will be used to manage the literature review and remove duplicates. The two authors conducting the search will perform data extraction independently. A structured form inserted into the Covidence software program will be used to reduce the possibility of data entry errors. Differences in the data details will be settled by mutual agreement. In cases of disagreement, consensus will be achieved through discussion with a third reviewer.

We will contact corresponding authors via email, when necessary, for instance, to confirm no double-counting of patients in studies published by the same authors or when mean values and measures of variability are presented only in figures.

Data management A quantitative summary of the data from all included studies will be conducted. Authors will create tables to summarize the included studies and describe relevant characteristics.

The following information will be extracted from each eligible study: (i) Study characteristics (first author's name, publication date, place of publication, and study design); (ii) Participants' information (sex, age, BMI, number of participants, clinical settings, and professional experience); (iii) Nutrition-related outcomes (knowledge, attitude, practices), measuring tools, and timing of assessment; (iv) Statistical analysis; (v) Study results; (vi) Conclusions (key points).

Subgroup analyses for the main outcomes for all the nutrition-related outcomes (knowledge, attitude, practice) and per outcome will be conducted according to the characteristics of the groups.

Language restriction None.

Country(ies) involved Israel.

Other relevant information Collaborators include librarians Amy Shapira and Ronit Marco, and statistician Shiraz Vered.

Keywords Nutrition; Physical Therapy; Knowledge; Attitudes; Practices; Clinical Competence; Scoping Review.

Dissemination plans The results will be disseminated through peer-reviewed publications and presentations at relevant conferences.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Roy Netzer - Equal contribution - Conceptualization; methodology; formal analysis; investigation; data curation; writing-original draft preparation; writing—review and editing; project administration - only R.N.

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