

Assessment of Barriers to Physical Therapy Care and Management for Adults with Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities in Iowa

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Objective:

This study aims to a) describe factors surrounding physical therapists in Iowa who treat adults with neurodevelopmental disabilities and to b) identify the potential apprehensions physical therapists in the state of Iowa have in treating adults with neurodevelopmental disabilities.

Background Information:

Individuals with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities often experience decreased satisfaction with quality of healthcare services when they transition from pediatric to adult settings. Research suggests the decreased quality of care is often due to the provider's lack of knowledge regarding childhood-onset disabilities and diseases. Information specific to physical therapy care of adults with neurodevelopmental disabilities is more limited, though some published information points toward similar trends of decreased access and barriers as is seen in the broader healthcare environment.

Methods:

A literature review was conducted in order to identify discrepancies in the care of adults with neurodevelopmental disabilities, predict the possible barriers that physical therapists face when treating this patient population, and understand the importance of correcting these discrepancies and barriers. Additionally, a secondary literature review was conducted on survey development in order to formulate an effective and unbiased survey. A survey was developed to gain knowledge of the comfort and knowledge physical therapists have regarding management and treatment of adults with childhood onset neuromotor disabilities as well as any barriers that they feel may prevent them from providing adequate care. Pending IRB approval, the survey will be electronically distributed to physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in the state of Iowa. Responses will be analyzed to identify gaps of knowledge, skills, and resources.

Discussion:

We hypothesize that barriers will include lack of experience treating patients with neurodevelopmental disabilities as well as inadequate time and clinic resources for effective treatment. We hope that through identification of barriers, continued efforts with this study will allow us to identify appropriate educational resources to address the barriers and work to make these accessible to practicing physical therapists as well as for training of future physical therapists.