

Professional and Social Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic among Physiotherapists Working in the State Hospitals in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

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Introduction: COVID-19 rapidly overwhelmed the entire world and challenged healthcare professionals globally. Physiotherapy is one of the main professions affected by it. **Method:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among the physiotherapists in the government health sector in the Western Province, Sri Lanka. Objective was to find out the professional and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on them. Data collection was done using a self-administered questionnaire which was validated with pilot study and overall analysis was done using SPSS21. **Result:** There were 185 participants with 96 (52%) males and 97.8% of were vaccinated with two doses of AstraZeneca vaccine. Majority (69%) used hand gloves, sanitizers and surgical masks as protective measures while 3% used goggles. Only 39% of physiotherapists received training for Covid-19 protection while 61% were educated via the internet. The overall patients treated by themselves were reduced to 45.8% and 10.6% of them were compelled to treat Covid-19 patients. About 10.3% of them were stressed due to high workload and 12.2% were afraid of getting affected by Covid-19. The majority worked eight hours or more per day. And 50% of physiotherapists practiced online consultation. About 24.7% experienced a high cost of living still 40 (19.3%) refrains from private practice. Six (2.3%) were temporarily resigned while two (0.8%) gave permanent resignation. About 15.8% of physiotherapists and 45.5% of their relatives /friends became COVID positive. 30% of them experienced a loss of their family member or colleague due to COVID. The study has revealed that there is no association between work-related factors before and during the pandemic. **Conclusion:** COVID-19 had changed the routine professional life of a physiotherapist and majority managed to have protective measures when handling the patients and adaptation of their treating methods.

Keywords: Covid-19, physiotherapists, pandemic, Sri Lanka