

## CORRESPONDENCE

## Physiotherapists as Public Health Promoters: Will it be Mirage or Legitimacy in India?

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Sir

Globally physiotherapists have been involved not only in clinical practices but also in preventive healthcare services. It has been recently realized that physiotherapists can make an important contribution to preventive health care through health promotion and screening.<sup>1</sup> Different nations have utilized physiotherapists as skilled human resource in various ways, such as engaging in increasing movement ability, improving function and promoting physical fitness through physiotherapy works force in Israel<sup>2</sup> or engaging in primary healthcare team in Ontario<sup>3</sup> etc. Evidences suggest that physiotherapists usually practice health promotion activities less or more as of their normal routine activities such as assisting patients to increase physical activity, smoking cessation and cardiothoracic exercise advices and further also willing to act as health promoters if given a chance with appropriate training.

In India, there is no such legalized authorized government body nor council to monitor these budding professionals and many “*Satyagrahas*” currently going on to formulate a Physiotherapy Council. On other hand, the current National Health Policy 2017 also states lack of skilled human resources for effective implementation of national health programs. If given a chance; these skilled health professional (physiotherapists) could have engaged as public health promoters as one of the many stakeholders. It must advocate for its role by demonstrating to other health care providers, governments and policy makers how physiotherapy can contribute to the health promotion approach. It is also clear that current educational knowledge of Indian physiotherapists need to be improved by introducing a special module on “*Health Promotion & Practices in Physiotherapy*” in the course curriculum as done in Australia. Specific rules & regulations need to be developed in collaboration with national governing bodies to establish a clear cut guideline within their domains, for engaging physiotherapists in the field of health promotion.

In the last few decades, there has been a call for reorientation of health services towards health promotion and prevention. Furthermore linking of health promotion with physiotherapy could be one step in attaining this

goal. Physiotherapists in education, practice, and research settings can participate in the advancement of health promotion not only to the mainstream but to the forefront of public health practices. Factually, physiotherapists have taught patients how to manage illness; however in the future, the focus must be on teaching people how to remain healthy, if the current health policy targets this issue. Physiotherapists must have an evidence-based understanding of the significant effect that can be made through health promotion interventions and communicate this understanding to the public at large. Thus, Physiotherapists could become role models in national perspective and should have confidence in addressing broader health issues.

### References

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