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Knowledge and Attitudes of Physiotherapy Students About the Role of Physiotherapy in Mental Health

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Background:

There is a growing body of evidence in South Africa regarding the role of physiotherapists in mental health, and the knowledge and attitudes of physiotherapists regarding this role. However, little is known about physiotherapy students' knowledge and attitudes regarding the role of physiotherapy in mental health.

Purpose:

To establish the knowledge and attitudes of undergraduate physiotherapy students towards the role of physiotherapy in mental health.

Methods:

This was a descriptive, cross-sectional study. Third- and fourth- year undergraduate physiotherapy students at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa were invited complete an online questionnaire about their knowledge and attitudes regarding the role of physiotherapy in mental health. The online questionnaire included the: Mental Health Knowledge Schedule (MAKS) and the Mental Illness Clinicians' Attitudes (MICA) scale.

Results:

Thirty-four students participated in this study, representing a response rate of approximately 36%. The results indicated a moderate level of knowledge and a positive attitude towards mental health (MAKS score was 26.94 (SD 3.57), MICA score was 39.12 (SD 16.12). The fourth-year students had a lower MAKS score (26.70) demonstrating more knowledge when compared to the third-year students.

Conclusion:

Physiotherapy students have moderate knowledge and a positive attitude of the role of physiotherapy in mental health. However further research across all universities is needed.

Implications:

This study indicates the level of knowledge and attitudes of physiotherapy students. More research is needed and may inform curriculum development of the undergraduate physiotherapy programme in South Africa

Keywords: mental health, physiotherapy, undergraduate, knowledge, attitudes

