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## Evaluating and Treating People Living with HIV/AIDS: What does Physical Therapists' Attitudes Say?

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### Abstract

Healthcare professionals' attitudes determine their knowledge and behavior towards evaluation and treatment of people living with Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Physiotherapists (PTs) are an essential part of a multidisciplinary rehabilitation team to provide holistic care for people with AIDS (PLWA) targeting along a symptom control- quality of life continuum. This short report summarized the findings from research studies on attitudes of PTs towards PLWA from an evidence-informed perspective through a preliminary search of PubMed database.

**Keywords:** AIDS; Physiotherapists; PLWA.

### Introduction

Adequate knowledge, positive attitude, and willingness to provide services are important factors in rendering competent and compassionate care to patients living with Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Physiotherapists (PTs) are an essential part of a multidisciplinary rehabilitation team to provide holistic care for people with AIDS (PLWA) targeting along a symptom control- quality of life continuum.

This short report aimed to summarize the findings from research studies on attitudes of PTs towards PLWA from an evidence-informed perspective through a preliminary search of PubMed database.

### Main Findings

### Assessment of Attitudes

### Students

Oyeyemi et al [1] investigated 104 Nigerian physiotherapy students' knowledge, attitude, and their willingness to provide care for PLWA to determine the sociodemographic variables that could influence the students' attitude and willingness to provide care for PLWA. The students had poor knowledge, negative attitude with care-related unwillingness. Religious affiliation, training programs, long-term career goals, and previous instructions on AIDS were found to influence the students' attitude.

### Professionals

Oyeyemi et al [2] studied the 131 practising Nigerian physiotherapists' knowledge, attitude and willingness to provide care for patients living with AIDS (PLWA), and also determined the relationship between socio-demographic variables and previous encounter with PLWA, and physiotherapists' knowledge, attitude and willingness to care for AIDS survivors. The study found that physiotherapists showed inadequate knowledge about AIDS, with negative attitude towards PLWA, and unwillingness to provide care for PLWA.

### Treatment of Attitudes

Held [3] compared the effect of an education unit versus control group delayed-intervention on 103 entry-level undergraduate junior physical therapy students' knowledge about acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), their attitudes toward patients with AIDS, and their willingness to treat patients who have AIDS. The experimental group was found to improve their knowledge, attitudes, and willingness to treat patients who have AIDS as a result of the AIDS education unit.

## Discussion

Our short report found only limited number of studies on this context and this insufficient evidence together with limited focus on such an important healthcare issue is an urgent need from a public health perspective in India. Inadequate knowledge and poor attitude could exclude the application of the principles of logic and scientific methods to the practice of physiotherapy, and could result in fragmented care, with a potentially negative impact on treatment outcome and patient satisfaction.

The studies and their findings warrant a comprehensive AIDS education interventions targeting interprofessional education in order to address the knowledge deficits and negative attitudes which may lead to stereotyping behavior and bias against PLWA.

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