

2011

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Julia Hush

Vivian Yung

Martin Mackey

Benedict M. Wand

University of Notre Dame Australia, benedict.wand@nd.edu.au

Roger Adams

See next page for additional authors

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This other was originally published as:

Hush, J., Yung, V., Mackey, M., Wand, B. M., Adams, R., Nelson, R., & Beattie, P. (2011). What factors determine patient satisfaction with musculoskeletal physiotherapy care in Australia?. *World Physical Therapy 2011*.

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Authors

Julia Hush, Vivian Yung, Martin Mackey, Benedict M. Wand, Roger Adams, Roger Nelson, and Paul Beattie

WHAT FACTORS DETERMINE PATIENT SATISFACTION WITH MUSCULOSKELETAL PHYSIOTHERAPY CARE IN AUSTRALIA?

Julia Hush, Vivian Yung, Martin Mackey, Benedict Wand, Roger Adams, Roger Nelson
Paul Beattie

Purpose: To investigate factors that determine patient satisfaction with musculoskeletal physiotherapy care in Australia.

Relevance:

Patient satisfaction is an important patient-focussed indicator of the quality of physiotherapy care. We have completed an evaluation of patient satisfaction with musculoskeletal physiotherapy in Australia using the 20-item MedRisk Instrument for Measuring Patient Satisfaction With Physical Therapy Care (MRPS). In this paper we report on factors that influence patient satisfaction in this cultural context.

Participants: Three hundred and sixteen adults seeking physiotherapy treatment for a musculoskeletal disorder from 7 private clinics in Australia were included in this study.

Methods: Consecutive patients were invited to participate in the study at the start of their course of physiotherapy and anonymously completed the MRPS at the end of their course of treatment.

Analysis: Descriptive statistical analysis, correlations and exploratory factor analysis (using principal components analysis with varimax rotation) were conducted using SPSS Version 15.0 (SPSS, Chicago, IL). The number of factors was identified first by the number of eigenvalues ≥ 1.0 , with confirmation by the point of inflection on the scree plot. Factor loadings were used to assign items to each factor. Commonalities and theoretical relationships were examined to name and characterize each factor.

Results: The mean age of participants was 40 years (SD: 13) and 60% were female. Patients sought care for a range of musculoskeletal conditions: 29% for multiple diagnoses, 21% for back pain, 21% lower limb disorders, 13% neck pain, and 16% other conditions. Factor analysis revealed four factors that together account for 57% of the total variance. Thirteen items loaded onto the first factor, "individual attention." This factor explains 34% of the variance and measures how much attention patients perceive they receive from the therapist and the clinic staff. Three items loaded onto the second factor, "time." This factor evaluates how much the time involved for the patient to attend the clinic is perceived as being valued by the therapist, explaining 9% of the variance. Four items loaded onto the third factor, "physical effort," which reflects in patient satisfaction scores the extent to which the patients' physical effort to attend the clinic is treated as important, accounting for 7% of the variance. Finally, four items loaded onto the fourth factor, "clinic." This factor indicates the value patients place in the clinic being clean and having modern equipment and explains 7% of the total variance in patient satisfaction item scores.

Conclusions: Preliminary analysis of this Australian data set reveals four factors that influence patient satisfaction with musculoskeletal physiotherapy care in Australia. From the viewpoint of the patient these factors point to the necessity for patient satisfaction of patients

getting attention to themselves and their problem, reciprocal value for their time and physical expenditure, and the courtesy of cleanliness.

Implications: This study may help Australian physiotherapists to optimise patient satisfaction by ensuring their service addresses factors identified in this analysis. The results will also be valuable for comparison with patient satisfaction in other cultures.

Keywords: Patient satisfaction, factor analysis, musculoskeletal physiotherapy, Australia

Funding acknowledgements: None

Ethics: This study was approved by the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval No. 08-2008/10929).