



Future proofing the Physiotherapy Profession



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Background

- Global changes in population demographics
 - Ageing society (He et al., 2016; Newton et al., 2015).
 - Burden of long - term conditions (Wang et al., 2016).
- Public health and well-being agenda
 - Prevention and health promotion (Chan, 2017; Public Health England, 2016).
 - ‘Wellness’ as opposed to ‘illness’ (Barredo et al., 2015; De Feo et al., 2014).
- Evolving healthcare system
 - Cost effective and sustainability (Naylor et al., 2016; World Economic Forum, 2013).
 - ‘Fitness for practice’ – challenges and opportunities



Methodology

- Aim
 - To explore the role of the physiotherapist as viewed by undergraduate physiotherapy students and physiotherapy academics
- Focus groups
 - 6 physiotherapy academics (4 female)
 - 7 undergraduate physiotherapy students (5 female)
 - 50-70 mins in length and digitally recorded
- Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013)



Themes

Philosophy of practice

Changing role

Tension between cultures



An underpinning philosophy of practice that promotes holistic care and supports patient wellbeing is perceived to dictate the role of the physiotherapist

Philosophy of Practice

Core set of skills
(Students)

Traditional skills
(Academic)

“we’ve always had a
psycho-social kind of
aspect and added to
that to look at
someone’s wellbeing”
(Student)

“what is it that is
unique to our
profession...”
(Academic)



Awareness of the changing role of the physiotherapist including an advanced role and a more public health focus

Changing role

“public health - we haven't necessarily been prepared for certain situations like that; we just know that we should be looking at a person as a whole” (Student)

“yeah, it's changing, as with any profession it's a dynamic one...we gain some and we lose some” (Academic)



Tensions - Role mismatch between the university and practice and the demands of the market place

Tension between Cultures

“how many hours we’re spending on doing different things...it isn’t necessarily what they do on placement...”
(Academic)

“the final say is not with you [but with] the government”
(Student)

“a vision for the future it is about changing what the market wants, to be a closer fit to what we aspire to be” (Academic)



Conclusion/Implications

Questions to answer:

What should our core skills be?

What is our USP?

What should be our role in the public health agenda?

What does holistic care mean?

What do we mean by wellbeing?



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