

# Knowledge and Attitude among Under-Graduate Students Regarding Geriatric Physiotherapy

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**Abstract:** ***Background:** The geriatric rehabilitation is a developing field in community physiotherapy. The goal of geriatric rehabilitation is to restore independence and as much physical and mental function. A lot of undergraduate students are unaware of treatments methods. As the students interaction with senior patients is comparatively less, they should have a good and correct attitude. **Objectives:** To investigate the undergraduate students knowledge and attitude regarding geriatric rehabilitation. **Materials and methodology:** A cross-sectional study was conducted at Krishna College of physiotherapy, KIMSDU, Karad. A total of 148 undergraduate physiotherapy students were included by random sampling. **Questionnaire on knowledge and attitude on geriatric rehabilitation were circulated via Google forms and the results were collected. **Result:** This study results show that the knowledge in students is fair and attitude is poor. **Conclusion:** This study shows that undergraduate physiotherapy students have fairly good knowledge but attitude seemed to be poor, hence a more enthusiastic approach is expected.***

**Keywords:** Geriatric rehabilitation, Knowledge, Attitude, Under-graduate students

## 1. Introduction

India is a rapidly aging country and globally presenting a significant challenge for healthcare providers by the aging population. In the world, people are living longer due the improved healthcare facilities decreasing the death rates and increasing the number of living older individuals. The aging population extends the intensity required for healthcare provision for the reason that older people are generally slower and weaker than younger people in performing the same life task<sup>4</sup>. They tend to do things slowly due to their weakness in muscle power and degeneration of the neurons. It takes longer for health care professionals to diagnose older citizens due to the more complex status of their well-being and regale to their needs<sup>5</sup>. As disability increases with age<sup>6</sup> it is expected that the need for physiotherapy services for older individuals will increase in volume, intensity, and duration in workplace settings.<sup>1</sup>

Due to existing co-morbidity and socioeconomic concerns such as income, caregiver support, transportation; this population will require longer consultations and finer physiotherapy expertise<sup>1</sup>. As a result, physiotherapy shortages for the elderly might worsen unless practitioners recognize the potential that exists in this field. Service-learning will also improve students' attitudes towards older people<sup>1</sup>

Most individuals who have never worked with the elderly believe it is tedious and hopeless, but this is not the case.<sup>3</sup> Geriatric rehabilitation plays a role here as it is the planning directed towards the betterment of health state of the elderly population. It is critical for the elderly population to have a more active and independent life. Geriatric physiotherapy is much equivalent as physiotherapy for any other patient only specific treatment is taken at a slower pace to make them understand what is being done, requiring constant repetition<sup>3</sup> as they might forget or get confused. As they might present with existing co-morbidities they require a lot of patience to deal with. This population demands lengthier appointments and more skill.<sup>3</sup> There are many people involved with the rehabilitation of geriatric patients: the speech therapist, the orthopedic surgeon, the physical medicine consultant, the ward maid-servant, all these people have a great effect. All of our efforts are coordinated by the geriatrician, and his hands hold the reins for our direction<sup>3</sup>. Nurses dragging a patient out of bed is infuriating, especially after we spent so much time training them how to do it themselves<sup>3</sup>. The most crucial stage is to get the patient out of bed as soon as the sickness allows it; they believe there is no future in it, but there is, because it is both fulfilling and challenging to return an elderly person to their place in society<sup>3</sup>. Following an acute illness, the elderly patient may have confusion, brain injury, or anaemia, resulting in disorientation and lack of comprehension, loss of confidence, dread of falling or walking, and a lack of energy. Their haemoglobin level could be drop, and the medications

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that cured his acute illness could cause diarrhoea or dizziness<sup>3</sup>, these side effects can cause a delay in the pace of recovery. Their lack of desire to live is probably the most difficult to overcome.

To work as a geriatric rehabilitation physiotherapist, one needs a lot of patience, a great deal of stamina, ample enthusiasm, and a willingness to work with and in a team<sup>3</sup>. They must have a sense of humor and you must speak everything aloud because the patients may have hearing and comprehension challenges<sup>3</sup>.

Ignorance of and misconceptions about elderly persons have been found to negatively influence physiotherapy students' decision to work with them<sup>1</sup>. Student's opinions towards their families' expectations of them working with the elderly were also significant predictors of their desire to engage in this field. There is a study that says there is anxiety about aging as it plays as a mediator between experience in the form of factual knowledge and contact with the elderly.<sup>2</sup>

Factors such as the student's disbeliefs and wrong attitude towards the aged population decrease the effectiveness and quality of healthcare services.

#### Need for study

As students don't deal with a number of senior citizens on a daily basis this study will help in finding out whether the students have appropriate knowledge to treat equivalent conditions in geriatric people along with their attitude towards those patients

#### Aim

To assess whether the undergraduate physiotherapy students have suitable knowledge to handle geriatric physiotherapy and to assess their attitude towards geriatric population

#### Objectives

- 1) To study the knowledge of undergraduate students regarding geriatric physiotherapy
- 2) To understand the attitude of undergraduate students regarding geriatric population
- 3) To evaluate the student's physical, social, mental facts and misconceptions about aging
- 4) To encourage students and grow this field of interest eventually

## 2. Literature Survey

The survey was conducted in Krishna College of Physiotherapy which lies in the campus of Krishna Institute Of Medical Sciences Deemed To Be University situated in Karad. Karad is small rural city on the Pune-Bangalore expressway between Satara and Kolhapur. The major occupation of people residing here is farming.

## 3. Materials and Methodology

A cross-sectional survey was conducted and sample size 148 was selected by random sampling. The survey was conducted over a period 6 months. The data collection was in the form of questionnaire which was circulated via Google Forms. The questionnaire was approved and validated by the staff members of Krishna College of Physiotherapy. The participants were selected on the basis of inclusion and exclusion criteria, the chosen undergraduate students who were willing to participate were explained the need of study and questionnaires were sent. Inclusion criteria consisted of undergraduate physiotherapy students from second year to final year who were willingly ready to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria consisted of interns, post-graduate student and students who were not willing to participate. The data collection was divided into three parts; first part was the demographic data, second part was the knowledge questionnaire and third part was the attitude questionnaire . Demographic data: In this personal data such as name, age, gender, institution was asked. Knowledge scale: A tailor made questionnaire was used to assess the knowledge of students regarding the geriatric rehabilitation and for attitude scale. Attitude scale: The Geriatric Attitudinal Scale (GAS) by Reuben et al 1998 was used which was a 5-item Likert scale. The data was calculated by means of SPSS version 20. The responses of the knowledge and attitude questionnaire were calculated individually.

## 4. Result

A total of 148 participants between age 19-23 years with the mean age of respondents being 22 years. Out of all respondents 133 were female students and 15 were male. The academic year bifurcation is 52 % are from final year, 44.6 % from third year and 3.4 % from second year.

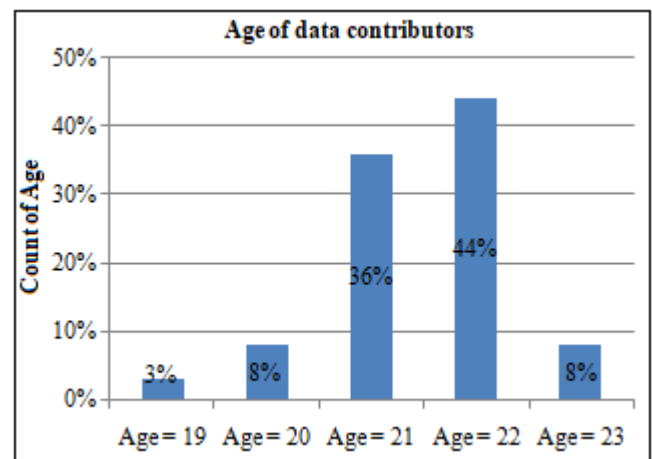
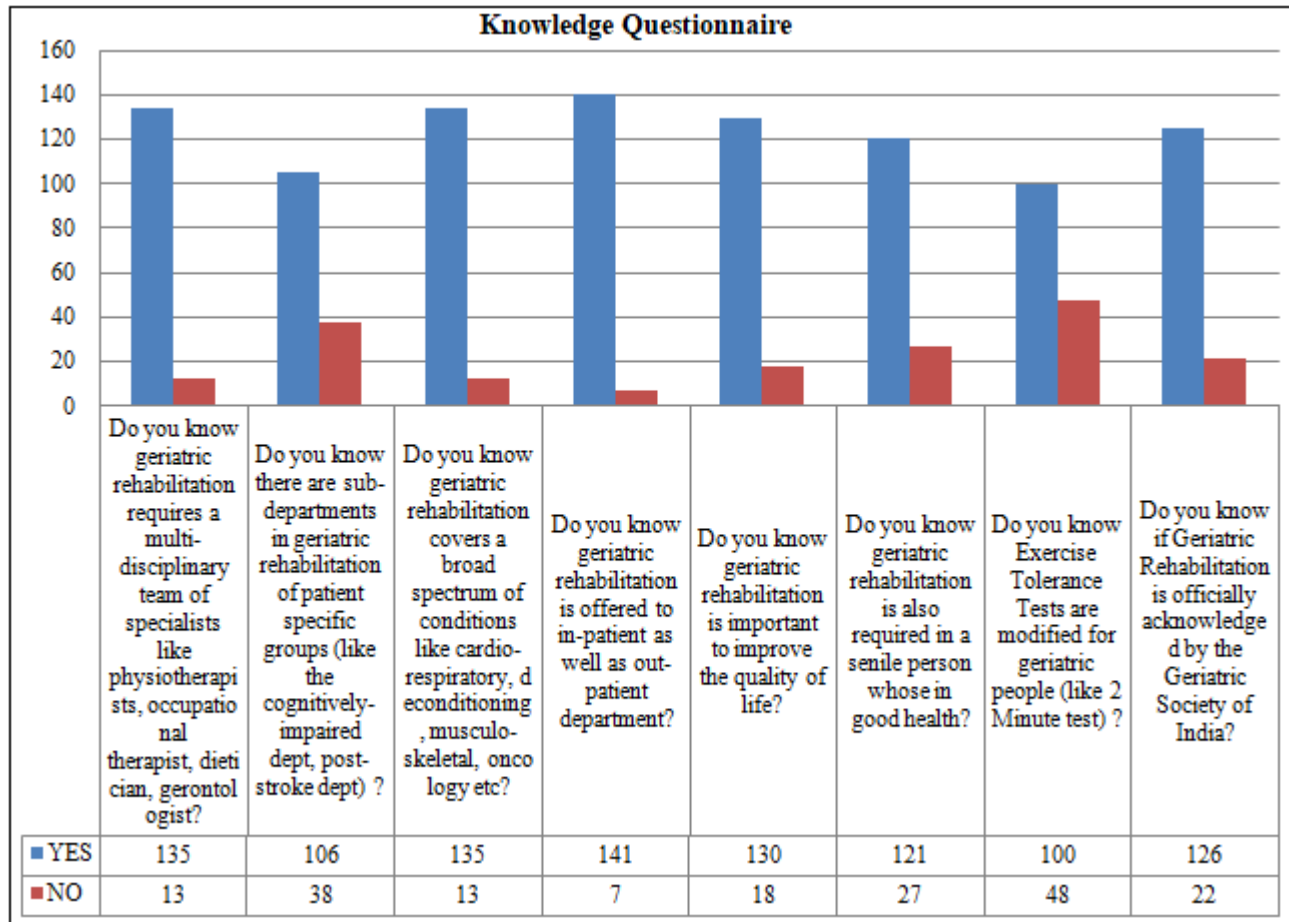


Figure 1: The age of the participants

**Knowledge Questionnaire:**

	Yes	No	p-value
Do you know geriatric rehabilitation requires a multi-disciplinary team of specialists like physiotherapists, occupational therapist, dietician, gerontologist?	135	13	0.2457
Do you know there are sub-departments in geriatric rehabilitation of patient specific groups (like the cognitively-impaired dept, post-stroke dept) ?	106	38	0.2741
Do you know geriatric rehabilitation covers a broad spectrum of conditions like cardio-respiratory, deconditioning, musculo-skeletal, oncology etc?	135	13	0.0277
Do you know geriatric rehabilitation is offered to in-patient as well as out-patient department?	141	7	0.0462
Do you know geriatric rehabilitation is important to improve the quality of life?	130	18	0.1740
Do you know geriatric rehabilitation is also required in a senile person whose in good health?	121	27	0.0260
Do you know Exercise Tolerance Tests are modified for geriatric people (like 2 Minute test) ?	100	48	0.4337
Do you know if Geriatric Rehabilitation is officially acknowledged by the Geriatric Society of India?	126	22	0.0335



**Figure 2:** Graphical Representation of Knowledge Questionnaire

Attitude questionnaire consisted of statements to which students had to give their opinion by selecting whether they Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral or no opinion, Disagree and

Strongly Disagree. The following tables show students review based on individual statements

**Attitude Questionnaire**

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	p-value
Most geriatric people are pleasant to work with	5	15	75	50	3	0.2763
I would rather see younger patients then elderly patients	11	59	41	34	3	0.1887
It is society's responsibility to provide care for elderly	5	10	23	54	56	0.0138
Elderly patients tend to be more appreciative of the medical care I provide than the younger patients	5	11	60	59	13	0.2121
Taking a medical history from elderly patients is frequently a difficulty	2	13	48	81	4	0.8178

The ultimate aim of geriatric rehabilitation is same as any other field rehabilitation	10	32	46	52	8	0.0031
Patience , compassion , communication is more important while treating geriatric patients	3	2	21	58	64	0.1385
Paying more attention towards elderly than younger patients is important	7	14	42	57	28	0.3754
Patient education is more difficult in elderly than younger patients	5	7	44	77	15	0.1010
Majority of physiotherapists give less priority to a geriatric patient	14	46	49	36	3	0.9513

## 5. Discussion

This research has umpteen implications for the physiotherapy profession in relation to the geriatric population as a result of the increasing demands in this field of rehabilitation <sup>1</sup>.

This study demonstrates the potential value of boosting geriatric rehabilitation knowledge as a means of reducing unfavorable attitudes toward ageing population<sup>2</sup>. While the GAS score ratings indicated a relatively negative attitude toward older persons throughout the undergraduate degree and a more positive attitude is desired.

This can be improved if younger students spend some time with the elderly they might understand their point of view and an improvement in their attitude might be seen. Several studies, however, revealed no link between the amount and frequency of direct interaction with the elderly and the development of more favorable sentiments toward them<sup>7,8</sup>. An attempt at understanding this reason was made and it claimed that the inability to establish a positive association between contact with the elderly and views toward them is due to the fact that most research just measures the amount of interaction and ignores the quality of contact a young person has with them<sup>9</sup>. Numerous studies have shown that better understanding of ageing was proportional to more positive perceptions toward the elderly<sup>10,11,12,13</sup>. Hence if the students possess good knowledge on the subject of the geriatric rehabilitation their attitude towards the geriatric population will enhance.

This study's findings support previous research findings that university students have negative attitudes about the elderly and that men have more ageist sentiments than women<sup>14,15,16</sup>.

This study provides evidence about the potential value of improving knowledge of students as significant number (40%) didn't know about the sub-departments , (42%) didn't know that exercise tolerance tests are modified. The evidence in this study is consistent with previous studies which found that knowledge is although not so poor but these results indicate that participants were not that well-conversant about geriatric rehabilitation.

Research findings say that university students tend to hold negative attitudes about the elderly. Majority had a neutral attitude that it is pleasant to work with geriatric patients (55.7%) , agreed that it is difficult to take their history (55%) and educate them (54.1%) , a very mixed answer for aims of rehabilitation was received . This indicates that their attitude towards the elderly and geriatric rehabilitation is not very enthusiastic.

Physiotherapy for older people has a valuable and effective role in health promotion. Geriatric rehabilitation plays an important role seeing that it is the planning directed towards the better state of health of the elderly population.

## 6. Future Scope

The health care for older people must not be underestimated<sup>1</sup> as its wide scope in future generation to come. Bigger and better departments with adequate infrastructure including proper equipments should be made. The existing rehabilitation centers should modify accommodating and adapting to the elderly needs. This will facilitate in targeting the geriatric specific conditions of the population and promote geriatric rehabilitation.

Limitations include this study was conducted in a limited population but it can be observed by taking a much larger sample size and in a more urban city

## 7. Conclusion

The evidence in this study is consistent with previous studies which found that knowledge is although not that poor but these results indicate that participants were not that well-conversant about geriatric rehabilitation. Regarding the attitude it indicates that their perspective towards the elderly and geriatric rehabilitation is not very enthusiastic and not appreciable.

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