

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Vital Role of Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) in Physiotherapy Education: A Narrative Review

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ABSTRACT

Background: Numerous studies have examined the vital role that Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) play in the education of physiotherapists. Colleges and universities that focus on paramedical and allied health are among the numerous institutions in India that provide physiotherapy courses.

IHEs' are actively engaged in research, helping to advance the area of physiotherapy by developing novel interventions, technology, and therapies. Students are taught to critically assess research findings and apply them to clinical decision-making by IHEs, which place a strong emphasis on evidence-based practice.

Aim of the Study: To evaluate the role of Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) in Physiotherapy education, to improve the standard of Physiotherapy education in both public and private institutions

Conclusion: The present study concluded that vital role of institutes of higher education (IHEs) in physiotherapy education improve the standard of physiotherapy education in both public and private institutions and to offer patients complete service. Although progress has been slow, we anticipate significant advancements in physiotherapy in the upcoming years in India. IHEs ensure that future physiotherapists are ready to embrace the future of physiotherapy.

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KEYWORDS

- Physiotherapy Education • Higher Educational Institutions • Health-care
- Research • Roadmap

BACKGROUND

Higher education is the training that leads to academic credentials like degrees and diplomas that are granted by colleges, universities, and other higher education establishments. Undergraduate, college, and graduate education are all included at this level of education. Most higher education programs provide professional education which primarily caters for vocations and professions. Higher education generally enhances an individual's quality of life as universities continue to exist to enhance knowledge and understanding. Higher education has emerged as a major driver of a nation's economy over the past 20 years, helping to create jobs, improve infrastructure for productivity, boost export revenue, and play a major role in the growth of cities and regions. The disparity between the capabilities graduates of Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) learn and the skills that employers require is putting pressure on higher education systems (**Fahmi Fadhl Al-Hosaini, et al. 2015**).

Physiotherapy as described by World Physiotherapy is a health care profession concerned with human function and movement and maximising physical potential. "Physiotherapists assess, plan and implement rehabilitative programs that improve or restore human motor functions, maximize movement ability, relieve pain syndromes, and treat or prevent physical challenges associated with injuries, diseases and other impairments. They apply a broad range of physical therapies and

techniques such as movement, ultrasound, heating, laser and other techniques. They may develop and implement programmes for screening and prevention of common physical ailments and disorders. Taking into account differences in health state, it employs physical methods to encourage, preserve, and restore social, psychological, and physical well-being. It is grounded on science and dedicated to expanding, utilizing, assessing, and reexamining the data that supports and guides its implementation and provision. At its heart is the use of clinical judgment and well-informed interpretation (**Physiopedia, Physical Therapy; 2023**).

Physiotherapists must stay up to date with the most recent evidence-based research and treatment methods worldwide in order to offer their clients the finest practices and high-quality healthcare. Therefore, since 2003, the World Confederation for Physiotherapy (WCPT) has supported the application of the International Classification of Function (ICF) in routine physiotherapy treatment. However, little is known about the extent of ICF use in daily South African and international physiotherapy practice in order to maintain international standards (**Nadasan, et. al. 2018**).

Top Physiotherapy Colleges in India 2024:

There are over **500 physiotherapy colleges in India**, and some of the **top 10 physiotherapy colleges in India** according to the Indian Institutional Ranking Framework (**IIRF Physiotherapy Ranking 2024 (Table 1)**).

Table 1: List of Top 10 Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) in Physiotherapy

National Rank (Survey & Perceptive Based)	Name of the College	City	State	State Rank	Zone
1	Pandit Deendayal Upadhaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities	New Delhi	Delhi	1	1
2	Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University	Varanasi	Uttar Pradesh	1	2
3	Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER)	Chandigarh	Chandigarh	1	3
4	SDM College of Physiotherapy	Dharwad	Karnataka	1	1

table cont....

National Rank (Survey & Perceptive Based)	Name of the College	City	State	State Rank	Zone
5	National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (Divyangjan)	Chennai	Tamil Nadu	1	2
6	Pt. B.D. Sharma Post Graduate Institute of Medical	Rohtak	Haryana	1	4
7	Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education & Research	Chennai	Tamil Nadu	2	3
8	Sanjay Gandhi Institute of Trauma & Orthopaedics	Bangaluru	Karnataka	2	4
9	BITS Institute of Physiotherapy	Vadodara	Gujara	1	1
10	Madras Medical College	Chennai	Tamil Nadu	3	5

Physiotherapist as Health-Care Professional:

This Act established physiotherapists as health-care professionals. According to the Act, a “healthcare professional” is any professional who studies, advises, conducts research, supervises, or offers preventive, curative, rehabilitative, therapeutic, or promotional health services and who has earned a degree under this Act that does not exceed 3600 hours spread over three to six years, divided into distinct semesters.

Three main themes emerged from the qualitative analysis (Figure 1). According to Allied Health experts, clinical supervision worked best when there were:

- Professional development was the focus of clinical supervision
- Supervisor possessed the skills and attributes required to facilitate a constructive supervisory relationship
- Organization provided an environment that facilitated this relationship and their professional development.

In figure 1, shows how these three main themes interact. At the centre of the model is the focus on professional development. The supervisor skills/attributes and organizational environment should facilitate this focus. The organizational environment on the outside emphasizes how crucial it is for the company to support allied health professionals’ professional growth and make sure supervisors are qualified and ready to do so. Within each of the primary topics, three subthemes also surfaced: the significance of the supervisory relationship, the value of clinical supervision in relation to other professional responsibilities, and the adaptability of clinical supervision models, procedures, and approaches (Snowdon et al. 2020) (Figure 1).

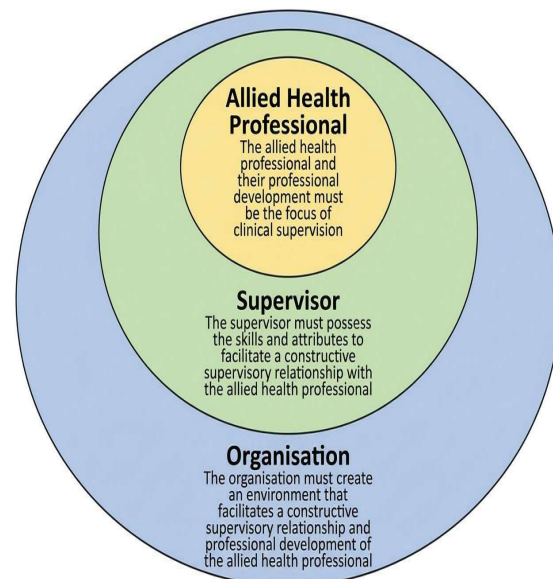


Figure 1: Effective clinical supervision of allied health professionals

Physiotherapy Courses in India:

There are some of the **best physiotherapy institute in India** that provide good education in this field of medical science at undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels. The best private Physiotherapy colleges in India provide a solid foundation in both theory and practical skills, enabling students to make a positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals across the country. As the demand for healthcare services continues to rise, the role of physiotherapists in India is becoming increasingly important (Health Science; 2024).

In India, physiotherapy courses are offered at various educational institutions, and they prepare students to become skilled and qualified physiotherapists. Here is an overview of physiotherapy courses in India (Table 2):

Table 2: Courses and details in Physiotherapy

Courses	Details
Bachelor of Physiotherapy (BPT):	• Duration: Bachelor's in Physiotherapy is typically a 4.5-year undergraduate program, including a mandatory 6-month internship. • Eligibility: Candidates should have completed 10+2 with Biology as a subject and meet the specific eligibility criteria set by individual colleges or universities.
Master of Physiotherapy (MPT):	• Duration: The two-year MPT postgraduate program offers specialization in pediatric physiotherapy, neurology, orthopedics, sports, and other fields. • Eligibility: Candidates should hold a BPT degree and fulfill any additional admission requirements set by the specific institution.
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Physiotherapy:	• Duration: Ph.D. programs in physiotherapy typically take 3-5 years to complete and involve original research in a specific area of physiotherapy. • Eligibility: Applicants must have a master's degree in physiotherapy or a related field and meet the research and admission criteria of the respective institution.

Boards/Councils and Functional Associations:

India's physiotherapy profession has advanced significantly, as evidenced by the Allied and Health Professionals Commission Bill. The measure marks a critical turning point in our view of the autonomy and significance of physiotherapists in the medical field. To determine how ready this profession is to operate as a single body with such autonomy, it is essential to look at the current status of physiotherapy education across India.

Physiotherapy has been extremely important in the medical field, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when these professionals have made significant contributions. Therefore, specialization within the field was made possible by the development of physiotherapy education at the start of the twenty-first century. As a result of career advancement, more Indian colleges are now offering PhD degrees in physiotherapy (Rajkiran Tiku *et. al.*, 2024).

Professional Council of the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions:

The Indian Parliament enacted the National Commission for Allied and Health Care Professions bill on March 28, 2021 and an Interim commission was set up for National commission for allied and health care profession act under the rules notified by the central government on 27th May 2021.

The preamble of this Commission provides for the regulation and maintenance of standards of education and services by allied and health care professionals. The Commission evaluates institutions, maintains a Central Register

and State Registers and creates a system for improving access, research and development and adoption of latest scientific advancements. The process of drafting standardization of curriculum in physiotherapy education across the country was initiated.

Eligibility Criteria for admission:

- **National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET):**

The Bachelor of Physiotherapy (BPT) and other undergraduate medical and dental programs need passing the national entrance exam known as NEET. For BPT admissions, NEET scores are taken into account by numerous states and private universities. The majority of India's best government physiotherapy schools accept the exam.

- **Common Entrance Test (CET):**

For admission to BPT programs, a number of Indian states hold their own CETs. State CETs are unique to each state and are used for admissions by both public and private colleges in that state. Among the examples are:

- Maharashtra Common Entrance Test (MH-CET) for Maharashtra
- Andhra Pradesh Engineering, Agriculture, and Medical Common Entrance Test (AP-EAMCET) for Andhra Pradesh
- Kerala Engineering, Architecture, Medical (KEAM) for Kerala

Duration of Course:

The normal duration of a Bachelor of Physiotherapy (BPT) program is four years, with a six-month internship required. However, the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions recommends a five-year curriculum that includes a year-long internship at the bachelor's degree level. The aim of the five year degree program is to enable the development of the PT as an independent health care practitioner as well as a key member of the multidisciplinary team and to enable him/her to execute advanced diagnosis, preparation/planning/delivery/prescription of physiotherapy treatment as well as quality assurance (MOHFW; 2021).

Members for Physiotherapy Professional Council.

National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Act, 2021 (14 of 2021) constituted five (5) members for Physiotherapy Professional Council (Table 3).

Table 3: Professional Council of the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions

Physiotherapy Professional Council	
1.	Dr KM Annamalai (PhD) Chancellor-Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gujarat.
2.	Dr Ali Hussain Irani (PhD) Principal, Physiotherapy, NMIMS Deemed to be University, Mumbai.
3.	Dr V P Gupta (PhD) Senior Manager-Physiotherapy, Fortis EScort Heart Institute, New Delhi
4.	Dr Ashish D Kakkad (PhD) Professor, Marwadi University, Gujarat.
5.	Dr Vijay Kage (PhD) Professor and Dean, KAHER Institute of Physiotherapy, Karnataka.

The Indian Association of Physiotherapists (IAP)

The Indian Association of Physiotherapists (IAP) is the primary self-regulation body for physiotherapists in India. It has been instrumental in developing the subject and setting standards for practice and instruction since its foundation in 1955. Among the IAP's primary duties are:

- Accrediting physiotherapy colleges and programs.

- Conducting examinations for physiotherapy graduates.
- Maintaining a register of qualified physiotherapists.
- Advocating for the rights and recognition of physiotherapists.
- Promoting continuing professional development.

Structure of the Document:

Subsequently is a modern and progressive publications that offers curriculum development assistance along with tools, advice. It consists of three parts: an introduction, a detailed tutorial on creating an entry-level curriculum for physiotherapists, and a curriculum template. This paper discusses six crucial elements for developing an excellent entry-level curriculum for physiotherapists, in accordance with the Physiotherapist Education Framework (figure 2).



Figure 2: Six core elements of Physiotherapy IHEs

The Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) that develops the programme is a recognised degree granting institution, and that it has institutional infrastructure, policies, procedures, and personnel capable of designing, developing, and delivering the physiotherapist entry level education. It briefly refers to the IHEs infrastructure and culture, and academic staff, as those are covered in more detail in the Physiotherapist education framework (Nihad A. Almasri, et. al.2022).

Practice Education:

The physiotherapy curriculum includes practical education as a vital and essential

component. In this test and the Physiotherapist Education Framework, the term “practice education” refers to learning experiences that are carried out outside of IHEs under the guidance of appropriately certified

physiotherapists. The term “practice education” encompasses experiences in both clinical and non-clinical settings where physiotherapists operate (WCPT, 2019) (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Physiotherapist entry level education programme

Practice education must be an integral part of the program. Under supervision, students enhance their diagnostic and therapeutic skills in an abundance of patient groups and practice environments during practical education. Practical training is planned in a progressive manner at the same point in the program when students have completed all the required and preparatory courses. It could be used as a stand-alone course or incorporated into other courses. Through the integration of clinical thinking, knowledge, skills, and behaviors, students progress from beginner to entry-level practitioner throughout the program. As students move through the curriculum, practice education placements become more challenging (Melrose S, P.C., Perry B; 2021).

STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN

Enhancing Physiotherapy Education

Programs including the Bachelor of Physiotherapy (BPT), Master of Physiotherapy (MPT), and Ph.D. in Physiotherapy are available in India. There is a growing need for qualified personnel in clinics, hospitals, and educational institutions due to the sizeable population in need of healthcare services. Patient treatment and general observation may be impacted by the different working styles of physiotherapy bachelor's and master's degree holders in the same department. To bridge this gap and standardize the practice of Physiotherapy, there is a need to streamline the Physiotherapy education system in the country.

Focus on Research

A fundamental component of the physiotherapy education program is research. After completing the Bachelor of Physiotherapy

degree, students are equipped to conduct, evaluate, and record research. Research is one of the most significant ways to advance knowledge, shed light on the unknown, and inspire original thought. It makes it possible for people to share research, find solutions to open problems, and contribute to the global body of knowledge. Research broadens critical thinking in addition to advancing the field. To improve the physiotherapy community in our nation, it is crucial to support physiotherapists who write and do research. Crucial actions include funding their research and opening doors for publications. Physiotherapists can use their research findings in their day-to-day work and share their findings at conferences and seminars. Motivating physiotherapists towards competency-based and outcome-based education fosters continuous learning and professional growth. IHEs conduct clinical trials to evaluate the effectiveness of physiotherapy interventions. This research provides evidence for best practices in patient care.

Combined function

Up-to-date knowledge is crucial for physio educators to improve teaching practices in physiotherapy education. Due to their lack of clinical experience and exposure to real patient care, faculty members may struggle to effectively teach practical material. For example, compared to teachers with only academic experience, educators with a background in both clinical practice and teaching can provide students with more relevant examples, allowing for a deeper grasp of subjects. For the thorough teaching of physiotherapy students, a paradigm that integrates the responsibilities of a clinical therapist and educator is advised.

This method provides students with a thorough understanding of modern technologies and societal issues with the assistance of mentors who are actively involved in clinical practice and academic training.

Adult learning

The application of adult learning principles is crucial in the teaching of physiotherapy. Teaching Gen-Z children requires an understanding that every student is different and has a different learning style. Instead of comparing pupils, teachers ought to create a positive atmosphere. Students' critical thinking and involvement can be increased by giving them real-world examples and pushing them to investigate circumstances. It can be helpful to pair slower learners with more adept pupils as instructors. All students can advance with time-bound lessons and tests that are adapted to their unique learning styles. Teachers hope to foster leadership, enhance communication abilities, exchange knowledge, and establish a supportive learning environment by encouraging student tutoring (Rajkiran Tiku, et. al., 2024

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: IHES IN PHYSIOTHERAPY EDUCATION:

In order to produce competent medical professionals who can manage a variety of patient demands, physiotherapy education is essential. A comprehensive review of recent studies offers important insights into the curriculum design, assessment techniques, and successful teaching strategies employed in IHEs around the world. We can find areas for innovation and development in physiotherapy education by looking at these components.

IHEs' physiotherapy education program has undergone constant change as a result of evolving medical demands and scientific discoveries. Manual therapy served as the field's foundation before progressively embracing scientific ideas and cutting-edge rehabilitation methods. Specialized areas of physiotherapy emerged as evidence-based practice gained traction in the late 20th century. The future of physiotherapy education is currently being shaped by interprofessional cooperation and contemporary technology (Figure 4).

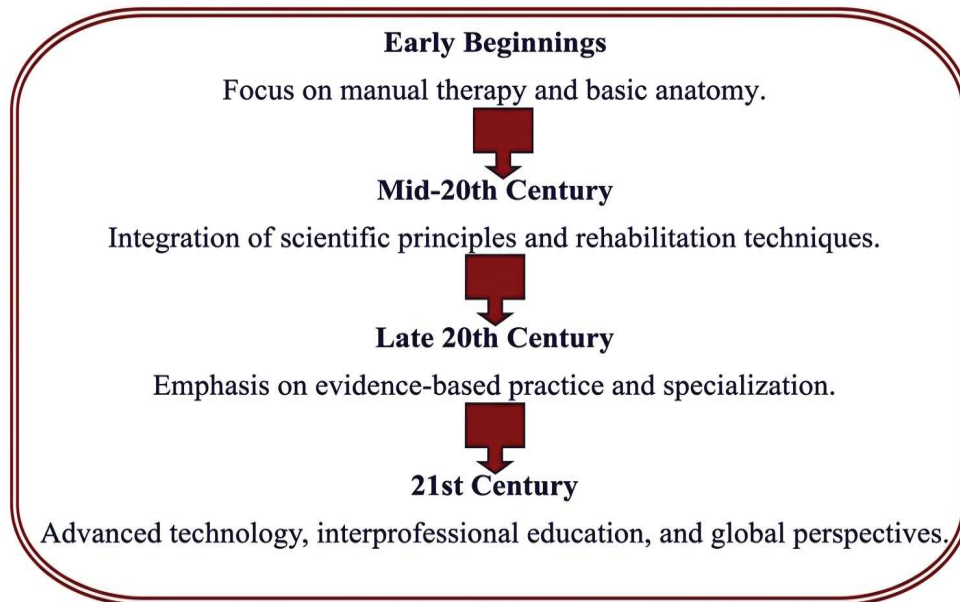


Figure 4: Evolution of Physiotherapy Education in IHEs

Curriculum Design:

Theoretical sciences and practical skills are integrated into physiotherapy education through effective curriculum design. The theoretical foundation is provided by anatomy, physiology, and biomechanics, while critical thinking skills are developed through clinical

reasoning. Important elements include manual therapy and therapeutic exercise, which allow students to use practical methods and rehabilitation concepts. By combining these elements, students are guaranteed to be adequately equipped for patient-centered care and real-world clinical situations (Figure 5).

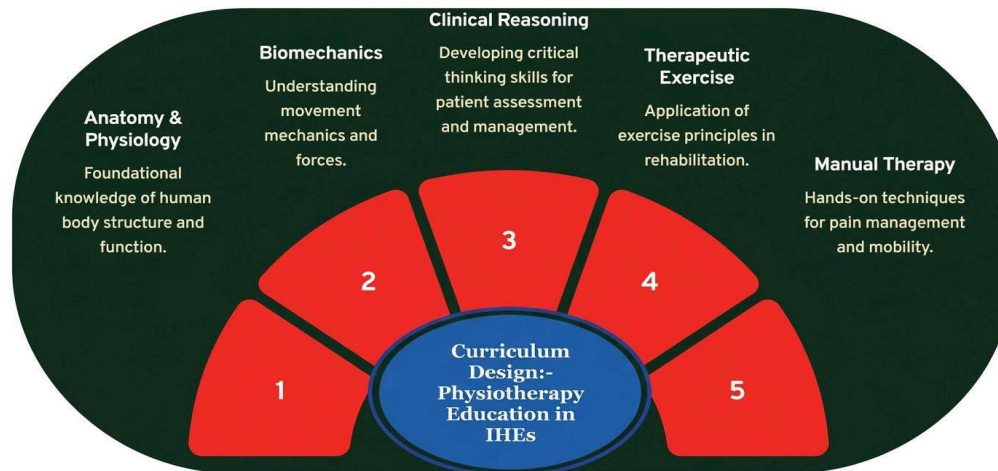


Figure 5: Curriculum Design of Physiotherapy Education in IHEs

The Role of Technology in Physiotherapy Education

By enhancing clinical practice and learning opportunities, technology integration is revolutionizing physiotherapy education. Virtual reality simulations offer immersive training environments, and e-learning

platforms give users access to online materials. Mobile applications are useful resources for patient education and rapid reference. These technological developments give students the abilities and information needed to succeed in the quickly changing healthcare industry (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Technology Integration in Physiotherapy Education

Virtual reality, wearable sensors, telehealth, and artificial intelligence (AI) all improve accessibility, data collecting, immersive instruction, and diagnostic accuracy in physiotherapy education. Higher education teaching methods have progressively incorporated digital learning designs during the last ten years. Digital learning has the potential to revolutionize teaching methods, raise the standard, and strengthen the sustainability of higher education, according to UNESCO.

According to one definition, a digital learning design is a didactic strategy that incorporates

digital learning technologies to assist students' learning processes and to accomplish positive alignment between teaching and learning activities, learning outcomes, feedback, and assessment techniques. The efficiency of the many digital learning designs utilized in the education of physiotherapists and other health professions is supported by contradicting data. Technology use in physiotherapy education was found to improve knowledge acquisition, performance of practical skills, and the growth of critical and reflective thinking. (Nina Bjerketveit Odegaard; et. al. 2021).

Authors Reviews in Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs)

Table 4: Authors Reviews in Higher Education

Authors, year of publication	Title	Journal/source	Conclusion
Fahmi Fadhl Al-Hosaini et. al. 2015	A Review of Balanced Scorecard Framework in Higher Education Institution (HEIs)	International Review of Management and Marketing	The analysis identifies the approaches of BSc that are pertinent to higher education institutions and shows how applicable BSc is in these settings. Establishing an assessment system that produces relevant performance indicators in higher education institutions is one of the BSC's strengths.
T. Nadasan et. al. 2018	Physiotherapists knowledge, attitude, perception and practice of the ICF, disability and health in Gert Sibande district, Mpumalanga Province; South African	Annals of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine	This translation process led to a Flemish-Dutch version of the simple intuitive descriptions and is now ready for implementation in rehabilitation practice.
Masood A. et. al. 2004	Awards of excellence in institutions of higher education: an AHP approach	International Journal of Educational Management	The conferring of awards at higher education institutions, regardless of the nature of the award, can be a complex, multifaceted, decisional process, and in most cases requires the involvement of committee members.
Ajith Soman et. al. 2021	Current Knowledge, Perception and Practice of E-learning among Physical Therapy Academicians in Karnataka, India	Int J Physiother	In conclusion, Most educators had the knowledge, willingness, and confidence to implement an e-learning program if given the opportunity. However, training and administrative support is needed to ensure that they become highly competitive in implementing such a program. Many believed that the e-learning programs are satisfactory
Dr. Rajkiran Tiku et. al. 2024	Addressing the Challenges of Physiotherapy Education in India	International Journal of Health Sciences and Research	The field of physiotherapy education in India needs improvement in various aspects such as selection of suitable students, creation of conducive learning environment, skilled teachers, promoting research, providing continuing education etc. Its main aim is to provide comprehensive care to patients and enhance the quality of physiotherapy education in both public and private institutions. Although the progress has been slow, we expect significant advancements in physiotherapy in India in the coming years.
Afzal F 2017	Major Challenges the Physiotherapy Profession Faces in Expanding its Role in Health, Prevention, and Wellness Services	Physiother Rehabil, an open access journal	Physiotherapy and rehabilitation is an essential part of health care and functioning. It is an autonomous profession and needs more attention to develop the job structure for physical therapists
Aleksandra K. Mącznik et. al. 2015	Online technology use in physiotherapy teaching and learning: a systematic review of effectiveness and users' perceptions	BMC Medical Education	The results of this review suggest that online technologies (i.e., websites and discussion forums) have many benefits for physiotherapy teaching and learning. These include enhancing practical skill demonstration and knowledge acquisition, providing students with fun, easily accessible resources, enhancing deeper learning, and encouraging reflection.

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded about the vital role of institutes of higher education (IHEs) in physiotherapy education. A vital component of health care and functioning is physiotherapy. Physiotherapy education in India has to be improved in a number of areas, including hiring qualified students, establishing a

positive learning environment, employing qualified instructors, encouraging research, providing ongoing education, and more. Since the 20th century, physiotherapy has been a vital component of India's healthcare system, serving as the foundation of every medical facility.

The primary goals are to improve the

standard of physiotherapy education in both public and private institutions and to offer patients complete service. Although progress has been slow, we anticipate significant advancements in physiotherapy in the upcoming years in India. IHEs ensure that future physiotherapists are ready to embrace the future of physiotherapy.

Abbreviations:

AH	Allied Health'
AHP	Allied Health Professionals
AP	Andhra Pradesh Engineering, Agriculture, and
-EAMCET	Medical Common Entrance Test
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BPT	Bachelor of Physiotherapy
CAI	Computer-Assisted Instruction
CET	Common Entrance Test
IHE	Institutes of Higher Education
ICF	International Classification of Function
IIRF	Indian Institutional Ranking Framework
IAP	Indian Association of Physiotherapists
KEAM	Kerala Engineering, Architecture, Medical
MPT	Master of Physiotherapy
MH-CET	Maharashtra Common Entrance Test
NCAHP	National Commission For Allied and Healthcare Professions
NEET	National Eligibility cum Entrance Test
Ph.D	Doctor of Philosophy
UG	Undergraduate
WCPT	World Confederation For Physiotherapy

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