



Malpractice of Physiotherapy and Electrotherapy Modalities Causing Serious Health Hazards and Longtime Sufferings to Patients: An Overlooked Health Issue in Bangladesh.

Bijoy Das

Associate Editor, Global Journal of Clinical and Public Health Research

Consultant & Head, Department of Physiotherapy, Ashulia Women and Children, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Abstract

Physiotherapy is a vital component of rehabilitation, recognized globally as an evidence-based health profession essential to achieving universal health coverage and optimizing patient functioning. However, in Bangladesh, a significant lack of regulatory oversight, professional recognition, and public awareness has allowed widespread malpractice and unqualified practice, posing serious risks to patient safety and public health. Unlike many countries with statutory licensing and clearly defined scopes of practice, Bangladesh lacks an effective licensing authority for physiotherapists and does not enforce professional standards, leaving patients vulnerable to harm. This commentary discusses the urgent need for robust regulation, structured education standards, and public health initiatives to safeguard care quality and align Bangladesh with global rehabilitation goals. We call for the establishment of a national regulatory body, integration of qualified physiotherapists into multidisciplinary healthcare teams, and public education campaigns to enhance awareness of professional credentials. Strengthening the rehabilitation workforce and embedding physiotherapy into the national health system will not only improve patient outcomes but also contribute to economic productivity and social inclusion. International collaboration and policy support are crucial to overcoming current challenges and improving rehabilitation services in Bangladesh.

Introduction

Physiotherapy plays a crucial role in rehabilitation, addressing acute injuries, chronic conditions, and disability across the lifespan. The World Health Organization's *Rehabilitation 2030* initiative emphasizes rehabilitation as an essential health service and calls for strengthening rehabilitation services worldwide, including workforce development and regulatory frameworks, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) like Bangladesh.

Current Challenges in Bangladesh



Despite its recognized importance, Physiotherapy in Bangladesh remains under-regulated and inconsistently practiced. Government recognition of Physiotherapy as a distinct, licensed profession is absent, and no single statutory body exists to register or oversee practitioners, leading to unqualified individuals providing care under misleading titles.

This regulatory vacuum contributes to variability in treatment standards and increases the risk of patient harm, particularly where advanced modalities are employed without appropriate training. Low public awareness exacerbates this situation, as patients often cannot distinguish between formally trained physiotherapists and unqualified providers.

Additionally, physiotherapists are frequently excluded from multidisciplinary care teams in hospitals, and regulatory enforcement mechanisms remain weak, contributing to professional marginalization and inconsistent care quality.

Global Frameworks and Evidence

Internationally, frameworks such as the WHO Rehabilitation Competency Framework support the development of standardized competencies, education, and regulatory structures that ensure safe and effective rehabilitation practices. Furthermore, World Physiotherapy and global workforce analyses underscore the need for context-specific workforce planning in LMICs to address disparities in rehabilitation service availability.

Systematic reviews indicate that rehabilitation services in many LMICs are scarce, and evidence supports that improved regulation and integration of services can enhance access and outcomes for people with disabilities.

Implications for Patient Safety and Public Health

The absence of regulation in physiotherapy directly affects patient safety, elevating the risk of misdiagnosis, improper treatment, and delayed recovery. In Bangladesh, both urban and rural populations suffer from inadequate rehabilitation services, prolonging disability, increasing healthcare costs, and reducing quality of life. Strengthening regulatory oversight and establishing licensure standards would protect patients and elevate professional accountability.

Recommendations

To address these gaps, we propose the following:

1. **Establish a National Physiotherapy Regulatory Council:** A statutory body empowered to license, monitor, and discipline Physiotherapy practitioners.
2. **Define Education and Practice Standards:** Align curricula and professional competencies with international frameworks, including WHO and World Physiotherapy guidelines.
3. **Integrate Physiotherapists into Health Systems:** Ensure formal inclusion in public health facilities and multidisciplinary teams.
4. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Educate the public about the value of qualified physiotherapists and how to verify credentials.
5. **International Collaboration:** Engage with global health organizations and professional bodies to support capacity building and policy development.

Conclusion

Unregulated physiotherapy practice in Bangladesh presents a significant and growing risk to patient safety and public health. Urgent action is needed to implement robust regulatory frameworks, elevate professional standards, and increase public awareness. Aligning national policy with global rehabilitation priorities will improve patient outcomes and contribute to the achievement of universal health coverage.

Bijoy Das

Associate Editor, Global Journal of Clinical and Public Health Research

Consultant & Head, Department of Physiotherapy, Ashulia Women and Children, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Email- dr.bjoy@gmail.com

ORCID - <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8733-2176>

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