



University of HUDDERSFIELD

University of Huddersfield Repository

Bridgen, Andy

Perceptions of podiatrists and physiotherapists working together

Original Citation

Bridgen, Andy (2007) Perceptions of podiatrists and physiotherapists working together. In: The Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists SOCAP Annual Conference, 18th - 20th October 2007 , Harrogate, UK. (Unpublished)

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/14366/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

BACKGROUND

Physiotherapists and podiatrists are working closer together in musculoskeletal services than ever before. The Musculoskeletal Services Framework (2006)¹ called for a shared care approach in the management of musculoskeletal conditions.

Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) have been challenged to be open to change "in the way they work, in the roles they play and in the care they give"². It has been suggested that changes to healthcare delivery will mean that the current structure of professions may not be sustainable³.

AIMS

To study podiatrists and physiotherapists working together in musculo-skeletal clinics to see how Government initiatives², have influenced clinicians' roles, their understanding of inter-professional working, changes to their practice and subsequent improvements in patient care.

METHOD

A qualitative method explored physiotherapists' and podiatrists' experiences of working together.

SAMPLE: Purposive sampling selected participants who were physiotherapists (n=2) and podiatrists (n=2) that worked together in a joint musculoskeletal clinic.

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS: Semi-structured interviews followed by a focus group of the participants. The data was analysed using Colaizzi's procedural steps to create a sound framework for analysing data⁴.



DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

The main themes uncovered after data analysis were;

CURRENT ROLES

There was mutual respect and appreciation of the other profession's skills. The participants believe there is equal status between the professions. There was reinforcement of the traditional roles, but an emphasis on a team approach to make the best use of the different skills of each profession.

Phys 2: I could do it better because I've got more experience

There was clear differentiation between the value of training and the value of experience. They had become experts not just through training but through experience and this was of greater value.

ROLE OVERLAP

There was an admission that some skills are generic. Both could undertake treatments that are traditionally seen in the others' role.

It was acceptable to cross professional boundaries if requested by the other profession. Comments made by both professions on this issue show that in the future this could be an area of conflict. Previous studies have all found that professions accept role overlap only on their own terms⁵.

ROLE EXPANSION

The need and motives for professions to work outside of their normal role was questioned.

Phys 1: I think, you know, to have everybody doing the same thing is just stupid

There was a view that present roles should be maintained and there was resistance to change. Negative comments were expressed about the future suggesting general unease about government initiatives in this area. The participants see themselves as guardians of the best interests of the professions and their clients.

FUTURE OF THE TEAM

All participants viewed their work within the team as positive and believed they had improved patient care. Concerns were raised over the future of the team due to concerns with NHS funding. There was a consensus that government initiatives are looking to reduce the status, power and autonomy of professions in the modernised NHS.

CONFLICT WITH THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

The view was held that health professionals are learning to work together but that doctors are not part of this process. The participants felt there was a lack of equality between AHPs and doctors. This led to negative views and attitudes towards the medical profession being expressed.

Pod 2: they never engage so you're stuck with a medical model at the top

These views draw attention to the concerns that the participants have with GP commissioning.

CONCLUSIONS

These participants feel they have extended their scope of practice and have learnt from working with another profession. They felt that working together had improved patient care by reducing patient waiting times.

They advocated strongly a team approach that utilises the skills of each profession to give the patients the best treatment.

Issues of role overlap and blurred boundaries arose between physiotherapy and podiatry. Since the benefits and motivation for change to therapist roles have not been justified in the participants' eyes, there was a strong sense of a resistance to any change.

A power imbalance between themselves and the medical profession was revealed.



REFERENCES

1. Department of Health, *The Musculoskeletal Services Framework – A joint responsibility: doing it differently*, 2006, London: HMSO.
2. Department of Health, *Meeting the Challenge: A strategy for the Allied Health Professions*, 2000, London: HMSO.
3. Doyal L., Cameron A., Reshaping the NHS workforce, *BMJ*, 2000, 15 Apr; 320, pp 1023-24.
4. Holloway I., Wheeler S., *Qualitative Research in Nursing*, Oxford UK, Blackwell Science Limited, 2002, 2nd edition.
5. Colyer H.M., The construction and development of health professions: where will it end? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 2004, 48(4), pp 406-412.