

Applicability of the acquired knowledge from Oncologic Physical Therapy specialization course and its impact in professional life.

Authors – Anke Bergmann, Solange Canavarro, Magda Rezende, Maria Justina Padula Ribeiro, Luiz Claudio Thuler.

PURPOSE - According to Brazilian Health Ministry, cancer is the second cause of death in Brazil. The National Cancer Institute (INCA) has as its primary mission the education of health professionals for dealing with cancer. Oncologic Physical Therapy is an area of expertise that comprises high complexity theoretical and practical knowledge. Specialization courses were designed in such a way to capacitate physical therapists for cancer care. INCA's Oncologic Physical Therapy specialization course dedicates 435 hours to theory and 1485 hours for practice. This research aims to evaluate the impact of this kind of specialization program in professional practice.

RELEVANCE - As active participants in health process as a whole, physical therapists must be formed to act in prevention as well in high complexity care. Oncology knowledge must be delivered in a way to enable its application in real life and this study is an evaluating tool to measure how much of the acquired knowledge is being used with this goal.

PARTICIPANTS - 78 physical therapists that concluded INCA's Oncology Physical Therapy specialization course from 2002 to 2007 received a questionnaire. From these, 44.9% filled and returned the form.



Physical Therapists who concluded INCA's specialization - 2007



Specialization students and staff pose for a photo in front of the Institute.

METHODS - It's a transversal study in which participants answered a 32 questions questionnaire concerning their impressions about the course and the impact of it in their professional lives.

ANALYSIS - A descriptive analysis was made using central tendency measures to continuous variables and relative frequency to dichotomic variables.

RESULTS - Demographic data of participants showed that most of them were women (85.7%), single (52.9%), living in Rio de Janeiro city (82.9%), mean age 29 years (21-43). Concerning the applicability of the course in their professional life, 88.6% of the participants considered that the course attended their expectations and punctuated it as excellent (71.4%) or good (28.6%). Previously to the course, 77.1% of the sample didn't work with oncology. After its conclusion, 65.7% found jobs in oncologic physical therapy, being 82.6% in Public Institutions. Their mean week hours dedicated to oncology assistance was 34.5 (4-60). Some of them (24.2%) initiated a Master Degree after the specialization course. The overall impact of specialization course in physical therapists' professional life seemed to be good since only 2.9% answered that didn't use the acquired knowledge in their professional life, and didn't feel capable to work in the area. Only 7.7% didn't refer salary improvement after the course.



PT Specialization student learning in practice.

CONCLUSIONS - Our data suggests that oncology physical therapy became a new area of practice to professionals that previously didn't have any experience in cancer care. the public healthcare system gained trained professionals for assistance and researchers. these findings imply that the specialization course – modality training in service – may be a valuable tool to form the physical therapists that society needs.

IMPLICATIONS - The training in service model showed in our study apparently point out the need of its development since it seems to be a more effective tool to qualify oncology physical therapy experts to act towards public assistance.

KEYWORDS - Medical oncology, specialization, physical therapy, education.

ETHICS - The participants signed the informed consent and the project was approved by INCA's Ethics Committee.