

# IFOMPT2016

*Changing roles and scope of practice*

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## PERCEPTIONS OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS TOWARDS THE MANAGEMENT OF PERSISTENT LOW BACK PAIN FROM A BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY.

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**Presentation Preference:** Oral or Poster

**Has the abstract been previously presented?:** No

**Background:** The physiotherapy profession have been urged to embrace a patient-orientated biopsychosocial framework for the management of persistent low back pain (LBP). Evidence has suggested that adopting such an approach may result in better outcomes for patients. However, little is known about how this approach is implemented into current practice and the challenges it presents for the physiotherapy profession[IC1].

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[IC1]356

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to explore the feelings, beliefs and experiences of physiotherapists in managing patients with persistent LBP to better understand how the biopsychosocial approach is utilised in current practice. Data from this study has helped inform the development of a training programme in a biopsychosocial behavioural approach to management of LBP called Cognitive Functional Therapy (CFT)[IC1].

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[IC1]352

**Methods:** This research setting was primary care in North East London Foundation Trust. To seek a broad perspective 10 physiotherapists were purposively sampled to undergo a training programme in CFT, based on gender, age and levels of clinical experience. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken and grounded theory was employed using a constant comparison method to allow careful and insightful analysis of the data[IC1].

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[IC1]351

**Results:** The physiotherapists recognised the multi-dimensional nature of persistent LBP and the need to manage the problem from a biopsychosocial perspective. The perceived barriers to embedding such an approach were (i) managing the biomedical treatment expectations of patients, (ii) feeling inadequately trained to deal with cognitive and emotional factors and (iii) not having the required time to manage these complex patients well. The physiotherapists highlighted the importance of fostering a therapeutic relationship and a desire to develop better communication skills to enhance patient engagement and 'negotiate' a more psychologically oriented treatment approach[IC1].

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[IC1]576

**Conclusion:** Physiotherapists recognised the importance of considering the multi-dimensional aspects of managing persistent LBP, but felt underprepared to address cognitive and emotional factors effectively. This study highlights the problems of best evidence guidelines recommending that psychological factors be addressed but providing no clear undergraduate or professional training to support this. The study also supports the need to allocate time to explore these domains in distressed individuals[IC1].

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[IC1]427

**Implications:** Future work should consider the development of training programmes aimed to equip physiotherapists to deliver a broader biopsychosocial oriented model of care and ways of potentially modifying physiotherapists' working conditions to allocate more time for patients deemed to be at risk of developing persistent LBP[IC1].

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[IC1]271

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**Ethics Approval:** The North East London Local Research Ethics committee has approved the study protocol (reference Number: 2352) and the study has been successfully reviewed by the East Midlands-Nottingham 2 NRES committee (14/EM/1045[IC1]).

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[IC1]Total characters so far 2278

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