ATTITUDES OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPISTS TOWARDS MULTIDISCIPLINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To explore attitudes of speech therapists towards multidisciplinary health care team.

STUDY DESIGN: A cross-sectional study

PLACE & DURATION: Sample was selected from hospitals of Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi where multidisciplinary line of care exists from 1st September, 2015 to 28th February, 2016.

METHODOLOGY: Thirty one speech therapists having more than two years of experience of professional services in multidisciplinary lines of care Participants were required to fill Attitudes towards Health Care Team Scale (ATHCTS) questionnaires. Questionnaire used was standardized Attitudes towards Health Care Team Scale (ATHCTS). Twenty one items measured attitudes in this questionnaire on a 6-point Likert scale with 0=Strongly disagree to 6= Strongly agree. Six out of twenty one items were negatively stated. All scores were dealt in a way that increases in score showed positivity in attitudes towards working with health care team. 6/21 items were reverse scored to get control over negatively stated items.

RESULTS: More than 50% of participants showed positive attitudes towards: physician’s key role in team; effective communication among team members; and role of team work in assuring patients' satisfaction.

Conclusion: Mediating role of attitudes in anticipating productive team behaviors suggests that all Speech therapy professional degrees, courses and trainings should incorporate education of multidisciplinary team work for productive services of Speech therapists in a health care team.

KEYWORDS: Speech Therapy, Interdisciplinary Health Care, Interdisciplinary Team Work, Attitudes, Multidisciplinary Team Work

INTRODUCTION

Multidisciplinary health care team involves professionals from different disciplines but interrelated knowledge and expertise who work in harmony to provide wide range of health care treatment opportunities to get best outcomes for physical and psychosocial well-being of patient. During the treatment process as the need of patient may change overtime, the members who are formerly a part of this team may also get changed to fulfill desired needs of patient. These health care services can be provided by team working under same organization or by professional brought together from different health care units, organization or private setups. An ideal health care team involves: community health and practice nurses; general practitioners; allied and rehab professionals; and health educators. Positive outcomes by the efforts of multidisciplinary teams can only be assured with improved communication and decision making skills bridged by good coordination between patients and members of health care team.

Speech language therapy is a branch of rehabilitation that evaluates and treats communication, feeding and voice disorders in all age groups. Speech-language therapist (SLT) or pathologist (SLP) serves as an integral member of health care team for patients in process of rehabilitation. Being a part of multidisciplinary team (MDT) they are in close interaction with general practitioners, medical specialists, nurses, psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and other relevant health care professionals. They provide their services in OPDs, IPDs, schools, homes, community settings and health care centers.

When it comes to patient safety it not only depends upon latest health care technologies and treatment options but on effective performance of health care professionals as a team. Internationally training programmers like Team STEPPS are conducted to observe effective changes in attitudes, knowledge and skills of members in MDT. Interventions based on interprofessional and collaborative practice make avenue for improved medical procedures and patient health care as positive attitude to understand roles of team members and incorporating efforts in team communication can link to enhanced positive recovery outcomes. Professional practice lacking in such positive attitudes towards collaborative practice leads to slow or inefficient progress in acute care settings as well as primary and community settings. Effective communication among members of MDT is vital for patient safety that can only build if members show positive attitudinal shifts towards each other. Attitude refers to expressing favor or disfavor towards place,
thing, person, object or an event. As discussed before positive attitudes among health care professionals for acceptance of each other’s expertise can result in long-term and quick recovery in a variety of disorders. Considering this belief many researches have been conducted to study interventions that can improve team effectiveness. In Pakistan Multidisciplinary lines of care are in initial phases of development. Present study is concerned with evaluation of attitudes of Speech therapists towards members of health care team in Pakistan. This study is a part of extensive research that measures attitudes of five health care professionals i.e. Rehab physician, Physiotherapist, Occupational therapist, Speech-Language therapist and Orthotist and Prosthetist working in Multidisciplinary lines of care in cities of Pakistan. The objective of the study was to explore attitudes of speech therapists towards multidisciplinary health care team.

**METHODOLOGY**

This cross-sectional study was conducted on speech language therapists in multidisciplinary settings from three major cities of Pakistan i.e. Karachi, Lahore and capital city Islamabad, from 1st September, 2015 to 28th February, 2016. Speech language therapists working in multidisciplinary team were included and those working on administrative positions were excluded.

A standardized structured scale named Attitudes Towards Health Care Team Scale (ATHCT) was used to assess attitudes of speech therapists towards members of multidisciplinary lines of care. This scale comprised items that measured attitudes towards: key role of physician; significance of communication among team members; and patient’s recovery and satisfaction.

**Data collection Procedure**

Questionnaire administrated through a member working in

**TABLE - 1: FREQUENCIES OF ATTITUDE SCORES ON EACH ITEM (N=31)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>*Scores</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in teams unnecessarily complicates things most of the time</td>
<td>A1**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team approach improves the quality of care to patients</td>
<td>A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team meetings foster communication among team members from different disciplines</td>
<td>A3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians have the right to alter patient care plans developed by the team</td>
<td>A4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients receiving team care are more likely than other patients to be treated as whole persons</td>
<td>A5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A team’s primary purpose is to assist physicians in achieving treatment goals for patients</td>
<td>A6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working on a team keeps most health professionals enthusiastic and interested in their jobs</td>
<td>A7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients are less satisfied with their care when it is provided by a team</td>
<td>A8**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a patient care plan with other team members avoids errors in delivering care</td>
<td>A9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When developing interdisciplinary patient care plans, much time is wasted translating jargon from other discipline</td>
<td>A10**</td>
</tr>
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Barriers in developing interprofessional skills can only be removed by accepting collaborated roles of health care team members along with mutual understanding of specialized roles of fellow members.24

Finding of this study reflect that Speech-Language therapists have positive attitudes towards working in interdisciplinary health care teams. Literature suggests that incorporating inter disciplinary team work education in curriculum designed for degrees of health professionals can result in strong positive inclination towards medical team works.25

Multidisciplinary health care providers from different but interrelated health care services work in collaboration to provide broad range of treatment for best health outcomes of patients. Speech Language therapists (SLTs) are important members of interdisciplinary health care teams when it comes to habilitation or rehabilitation of communication, voice, feeding or swallowing difficulties and oral motor deficits.

**DISCUSSION**

Attitudes are hidden tendencies of individuals that dispose them to respond in favor or disfavor towards particular object or behavior. Attitudes carry strength of predicting behavior in accordance with its positive and negative nature.27 Productivity in team work can only be assured when all of its members accept significance of being a part of team in achieving mutual goals with accepting their own and other members’ roles. Speech therapists are an integral part of interdisciplinary health care teams therefore their projection of positive behaviors in accomplishing goals of health care teamwork worth a lot for purposeful functioning of health care units. Interdisciplinary health care lines in Pakistan are in developing phase; hence to assure its positive functioning there is a need to assess attitudes of its members towards their work roles as a unit. In this domain present study aimed to explore attitudes of speech therapists towards health care team who are working in interdisciplinary lines of care. More than half of the participants in this study agreed from somewhat to strong extent with lead role of physician in decision making and responsibility of other team members to assist him in health care plans. Similar results were seen in a study conducted on Physical assistants, Doctor of Osteopathy, Doctor of Medicine and Nurse practitioners.28 Majority of the participants in current study also agreed with significance of effective communication, team meetings and understanding each other’s role for best patient recovery outcomes to experience real essence of working as a team. Such positive attitudes modify intra-team professionalism in a way that results advancement in team based health care practice.

**CONCLUSION**

Mediating role of attitudes in anticipating productive team behaviors suggests that all Speech therapy professional degrees, courses and trainings should incorporate education of multidisciplinary team work for productive services of Speech therapists (STs) in a health care team.

**LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

As mentioned before in results section that majority of participants agreed with negative attitudes on 4 out of 6
negatively worded items with same high percentages on their positive counterparts. Such dissonance in attitudes show response errors from participants which shows that statements have not been read carefully. Sample size was also too small to ensure generalizability of current research findings. Irreplaceable role of speech therapist as a member of health care team demands their positive attitudes towards team members and team work that serve as a predictor of their productive role in team. Therefore it is recommended to teach and train SLTs about aspects of interdisciplinary team work during their professional degree education for rapid forward momentum of their expertise when they come in professional practice.

Contribution of authors:
Muhammad Naveed Babur: Corresponding author, acquisition of idea and manuscript, introduction and methodology writing.
Nazia Mumtaz: Collection of references for introduction and discussion
Faseeha shafqat: Results and discussion writing, final formatting of manuscript

REFERENCES