

**Title:** The beliefs, behaviours and knowledge of health profession (HP) students towards the role of physical activity

**Names of presenter and co-author:**

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**Relevance to conference theme: Exercise and Decision making**

It is widely believed that physiotherapists are key health professionals in the promotion of physical activity (PA). However knowledge relating to PA among health professionals has been questioned. This study explores health professional students (including physiotherapy) perception of their role in promoting PA, confidence in knowledge and awareness of guidelines.

**Brief biography of presenting author (150 words):**

Neil graduated from Keele University in 2007 with a first class honours and has since completed his masters in Advanced Physiotherapy at the same institution. Having initially worked for Spire Healthcare when first qualified, he has been at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust since 2009, initially as a rotational member of staff before a stint in paediatrics. However, it is MSK where his passion lies, having worked as an MSK physiotherapist in a community setting since 2012. Working in this setting has highlighted the importance of preventative measures and public health to the NHS and the role that all health professionals play, which helped to inspire this research for his dissertation topic.

**Ethical review:** The study gained ethical approval from the School of Allied Health Profession student project ethics committee on 7th July 2018 (Reference code: 2018/19\_SHAR\_CA\_001).

**Title:** The beliefs, behaviours and knowledge of different health professions (HP) final year students towards the role of aerobic activity and its importance in health care: A descriptive study.

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**Purpose:** Physical inactivity is one of the leading causes of ill health worldwide. Despite updated UK physical activity (PA) guidelines (2011) PA levels remain low. Physiotherapists play an important role in promoting PA however studies investigating levels of knowledge among health professionals demonstrates a lack of PA-related knowledge.

This study aims to: 1) investigate final year health professional (HP) students' awareness of current UK PA guidelines, perceptions towards their role and confidence in promoting PA, and 2) explore differences between HPs.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was undertaken using an online survey. Final year HP UK-based students were recruited from Universities in the West Midlands and Keele University with a target sample size of 30 participants per HP. The survey gathered information on respondents' awareness of UK PA guidelines for adults and the following domains: beliefs, behaviours and knowledge related to PA based on surveys utilized by Clifford (2018) and Shirley et al. (2010). Respondents indicated their levels of agreement with statements on a 5-point likert scale. Cumulative scores were derived for each domain and analysed with descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA.

**Results:** One hundred and seventy-nine responses were submitted that met the inclusion criteria. Responses included physiotherapy 18% (33), nursing 19% (34), medical 20% (35), pharmacy 18% (32) and occupational therapy (OT) 19% (34) students. Thirty-five percent of all HPs were aware of the UK PA guidelines, however there were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) differences between professions (physiotherapy 66%, medical 34%, OT 31%, nursing 9%). Figures dropped when assessing accurate recall of the guidelines (physiotherapy 49%, medical 14%, OT 19%, nursing 6%). There were no significant differences between HPs in general knowledge related to PA to promote public health which was moderate to good and scores for role perception for each HP indicated that 80% of all students view promotion of PA as part of their role - although physiotherapy and OT students scored significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, 80% of all professions reported confidence in providing general PA advice, however this reduced for all professions (<41%) if asked to advise on specific details for exercise programmes except physiotherapy (90%).

**Conclusion(s):** This is the first UK-based study to investigate the knowledge of, confidence in promoting, and role perception towards PA across HP students. The results suggest that awareness of the UK PA guidelines amongst final year HP students is low. Compared to previous research awareness has not improved over time. All HP students felt that physical activity promotion was a part of their role and had high knowledge and confidence levels related to a general PA message. However, with the exception of physiotherapy students, confidence in providing specific PA advice is low, which may become a barrier and/or limitation in advice provided to patients. Further research is recommended into the prominence of PA promotion in curricula content.

**Impact:** Findings should be used to inform HPs educational curricula to emphasize the importance of HPs role in the promotion of physical activity and prepare students accordingly.

**Three key words:** Physical activity; knowledge; students

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