Osteoporosis Knowledge in Licensed Physical Therapists and First-Year Doctor of Physical Therapy Students: A Gap in Physical Therapy Education?

Suzanne Trotter  
University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, strotter@usa.edu

Jean-Michel Brismee  
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Jm.Brismee@ttuhsc.edu

Phil Sizer  
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Phil.Sizer@ttuhsc.edu

Brad Allen  
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Brad.Allen@ttuhsc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://soar.usa.edu/pt

Part of the Physical Therapy Commons

Recommended Citation
Trotter, Suzanne; Brismee, Jean-Michel; Sizer, Phil; and Allen, Brad, "Osteoporosis Knowledge in Licensed Physical Therapists and First-Year Doctor of Physical Therapy Students: A Gap in Physical Therapy Education?" (2016). Physical Therapy Collection. 34.  
https://soar.usa.edu/pt/34

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty and Staff Research at SOAR @ USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Physical Therapy Collection by an authorized administrator of SOAR @ USA. For more information, please contact soar@usa.edu.
Osteoporosis Knowledge in Licensed Physical Therapists and First-Year Doctor of Physical Therapy Students: A Gap in Physical Therapy Education?

Suzanne Fox Trotter PT, ScD, Jean-Michel Brismée PT, ScD, Phillip S. Sizer PT, PhD, Brad Allen PT, ScD

1University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, Austin, Texas; 2Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, Lubbock, Texas

Background

- A lack of osteoporosis knowledge has been found in a variety of healthcare providers
- No previous studies have evaluated osteoporosis knowledge between physical therapists and first-year doctor of physical therapy students

Purpose

- To assess the knowledge of participants in the course "Innovative Strategies for Preserving Bone Health: A Closer Look at Osteoporosis Management Across the Lifespan"

Methods

- 21 participants:
  - 11 licensed physical therapists with an average of 19 years of clinical experience
  - 10 first year Doctor of Physical Therapy students
- Outcomes were evaluated using statistical analysis from data collected in:
  - demographic questionnaire
  - pre/post course test
  - course evaluation survey
- Inferential Statistics:
  - Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test used to determine differences between pre- and post-course test scores for all learners
  - Mann Whitney U Test used to compare test scores between physical therapists and student physical therapists

Intervention

- Attendance at a two day, 12.5 hours continuing education course
- Exercise management taught (Figure 1)

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Pre test</th>
<th>Post test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>88.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Pre test</th>
<th>Post test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Difference between median scores was statistically significant (Z(26) = 4.466, p < 0.0001), indicating that a learning effect occurred as a result of course instruction
- No statistical difference between the knowledge of the therapists and students at the pre-course test (U(21) = 38.00, p = 0.251) or post-course test (U(21) = 39.50, p = 0.282)

Clinical Relevance

- Physical activity is critical in preventing osteoporosis, reducing falls and thereby reducing the risk of fragility fractures
- Exercise has been shown to be a safe and effective way to increase bone mineral density and reduce the chance of fractures in postmenopausal women
- Patient education and exercise for managing osteoporosis is a recognized and much needed intervention that should be provided by physical therapists. However, many physical therapists may lack knowledge to properly screen associated risks, educate patients about fall prevention, and develop appropriate exercise programs that minimize the risk of fractures while combating the damaging postural changes associated with osteoporosis
- Future studies should focus on how osteoporosis education can be improved, and if changes in knowledge would translate into changes in physical therapist's practice management

Conclusions

- The improved mean from the pre-course test to the post-course test demonstrates that a learning effect occurred.
- The lack of statistical difference between seasoned physical therapy clinicians and first-year DPT students indicates that there may be a gap in osteoporosis education among physical therapists.
- More research should be done to determine where this gap occurs in the education process and how it can be improved.

References