

Outcomes Research in Physiotherapy Education

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to evaluate research scholarship in physiotherapy education by analysing the content of educational articles published by South African physiotherapy academics. **RELEVANCE:** The hallmark of an academic is the dissemination of knowledge through giving presentations, conducting research and publishing articles in their area of specialty. Physiotherapy educators need to develop as scholars by conducting and publishing research in all three areas of their function i.e teaching, service/clinical practice and research. This paper focuses on the teaching aspect. **METHOD:** A content analysis of publications by educators in the SA Journal of Physiotherapy between 1989 and 2003 was conducted to identify and classify the educational articles. Further analysis of physiotherapy education articles was performed to determine the primary foci of the education research, using a three-dimensional educational outcomes research framework based on the paradigm of health services outcomes research. Each article was categorized according to the primary participant (i.e. student, staff member, institution and patient), outcome (performance, satisfaction, professionalism and cost), and level of analysis (geographic, system, institution and individual(s)). **ANALYSES:** Descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies, means and percentages was used for the analysis. **RESULTS:** The results revealed that most of the educators' articles focussed on clinical practice. Only 23% of the articles were about education and the majority of those were on clinical education (72%), with few articles on curriculum issues and teaching methods. **CONCLUSION:** South African Physiotherapy educators are developing as research scholars, but their research focus is on the clinical practice, and not on education. The importance of linking research, clinical practice and education cannot be overemphasised, hence the need to develop research in education. Strategies for development are proposed, based on scholarship models.