Where and How Does Physical Therapy Fit?  
Integrating Physical Therapy into Interprofessional HIV Care: A Research Study

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What is Physical Therapy?
It is a health profession dedicated to improving quality of life by providing services that develop, restore and maintain movement and functional ability.

How can it help in HIV care?
Living with HIV can come with complex health challenges. Studies have shown that physical therapy techniques can have positive effects on balance, cardiovascular fitness, strength, mood and neuropathic pain.

What was the purpose of this research study?
To investigate the role of PT in HIV care from the perspectives of healthcare professionals and people living with HIV.

For our study, we recruited:
- 13 adults living with HIV
- 12 health care professionals

We conducted:
Focus Groups  

We asked about:
- Knowledge about PT, including experiences with or as a physical therapist.
- Perceived roles of PT in interprofessional HIV care.
- Recommendations for introducing PT into a day health program for people living with HIV.

Framework of Physical Therapy Role in HIV Care
We developed a framework to describe the multi-dimensional and client centered role of physical therapy in HIV care.

It’s not just your physical well-being, it’s also your emotional and your psychological well-being... you can’t have the emotional... without the physical well-being, and you can’t have the physical well-being without the emotional well-being and that it’s just another aspect of HIV care (Participant Living with HIV #6)

What did we find?
1. PTs have a role in client-centred HIV care by addressing health challenges in overlapping physical, social and psychological domains (3 overlapping bubbles in the centre)
2. The role of PT can be influenced by 8 factors (the outer circle) that can interact with the 3 overlapping health domains. E.g. PT can help reduce the effect of Social isolation on health domains by providing group sessions.

Why does this matter?
1. Physical Therapists have an important role in HIV care - they can address psychological and social health issues in addition to physical health challenges for people living with HIV.
2. Physical therapy can offer individualized and goal-oriented approaches to care and can help people get back to important activities in their lives.
What is the Casey House Day Health Program?
Casey House’s day health program is a time limited, goal focused program for individuals living with HIV and complex health issues. The day health program provides clients scheduled and unscheduled access to nurses, social, mental health and substance use workers. Health care services includes physiotherapy, massage therapy, recreation therapy and hot nutritious lunches.

What services are offered in the Day Health Program?
- Hot lunch daily
- Nursing clinic including foot care clinic
- Individual counselling and case management
- Individual physiotherapy treatments
- Harm reduction supplies, groups & counselling
- Individual massage treatments
  - Wellness activities - e.g. yoga & stretching
  - Recreational activities - e.g. movies, arts & crafts, bingo
  - Women’s social & activity group

How can I get referred to the program?
If you think you might benefit from a physical therapist, please talk to your doctor or other health care professional on your care team and ask about a referral to the Day Health Program.

“I do things now that I could not do before, so it [physical therapy] makes you feel self-confident and builds up your self-esteem and makes you feel like you’re part of the rest rather than an outcast (Participant Living with HIV #8)"

Who can I contact for more information?

About the Day Health Program
For more information about the Day Health Program or to make a referral (including a self-referral) please call:
416-962-4040 ext. 8000

About the Research Study
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