



Physical Therapist Management of Musculoskeletal Conditions in the Emergency Department: A Case Series

CONTROL ID: 2340708

POSTER NUMBER: 1048

AUTHORS: Fruth, Stacie J.¹; Wiley, Steve¹; Naegeli, Kira¹; Neylon, Bridget¹; Cowger, Will¹; Harkness, Brock¹; Brickens, Michael²; Mulroney, Kirk²

AUTHORS/INSTITUTIONS: S.J. Fruth, S. Wiley, K. Naegeli, B. Neylon, W. Cowger, B. Harkness, Krannert School of Physical Therapy, University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, Indiana, M. Brickens, K. Mulroney, Emergency Department/Physical Therapy, Indiana University Methodist Hospital, Indianapolis

Background & Purpose: The emergency department (ED) is a novel but expanding area of practice for physical therapists (PTs). Even so, the role of PTs in the ED remains poorly understood. While many ED medical practitioners do not feel prepared to evaluate musculoskeletal injuries/conditions, PTs are considered musculoskeletal experts who are skilled in examination, diagnosis, and management of musculoskeletal conditions. To date, there are no published studies that describe PT management of individual patients or specific conditions in the ED. The purpose of this case series is to provide an in-depth description of five patients seen by ED PTs in which the distinct contribution of the PT examination and intervention is highlighted.

Case Description: Five patients with varied musculoskeletal conditions who were evaluated by an ED PT at Indiana University-Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis, IN are described. Each case was identified for inclusion by a full-time PT employed in this ED. Researchers examined each case by reviewing each patient's ED medical records and conducting follow-up phone calls at 2 weeks, 3 months, and 6 months following the ED PT intervention. Medical records were reviewed for practitioner impressions, diagnostic tests ordered, interventions provided, and recommended plan of care. Information gathered from the follow-up calls included the patient's account of the episode of care; additional medical, diagnostic, or rehabilitative care received; short- and long-term outcomes; and patient impressions of PT in the ED.

Outcomes: Several cases demonstrated the ED PT's ability to identify conditions that had not been recognized by ED medical practitioners, one of which led to surgical intervention within one week. In some cases, patients reported the PT provided interventions that led to immediate functional improvement when medical interventions had failed to do so. Across the five cases, patients reported that PT was highly beneficial and had a direct positive impact on the outcome of

their condition. All patients reported that the PT had an excellent ability to effectively answer questions and demonstrated a high level of care and concern.

Discussion: It is essential that the unique contributions of ED PTs be understood as this practice attempts to expand nationwide. Case examples can contribute to this effort. PTs are musculoskeletal experts who are skilled in examination and management of musculoskeletal conditions. This study outlined specific cases in which ED PTs were able to effectively diagnose musculoskeletal conditions that, in some cases, had not been identified by other ED practitioners. PTs were also effective in guiding appropriate discharge planning which allowed patients to receive timely, thorough, and appropriate interventions, including reported avoidance of additional ED visits. PTs practicing in the ED can play a unique and critical role in the interprofessional management of patients with various musculoskeletal conditions.

References: Must include 5 current references (less than 10 years old): 1. Gaieski DF, Mehta S, Hollander JE, Shofer F, Bernstein J. Low-severity musculoskeletal complaints evaluated in the emergency department. *Clin Orthop Rel Res.* 2008;466:1987-1995. 2. Childs J, Whitman J, Sizer P, Pugia M, Flynn T, Delitto A. A description of physical therapists' knowledge in managing musculoskeletal conditions. *BMC Musculoskel Disord.* 2005;6:32. 3. Sutton M, Govier A, Prince S, Morphett M. Primary-contact physiotherapists manage a minor trauma caseload in the emergency department without misdiagnoses or adverse events: an observational study. *J Physiother.* 2015;61:77-80. 4. de Gruchy A, Granger C, Gorelik A. Physical therapists as primary practitioners in the emergency department: Six-month prospective practice analysis. *Phys Ther.* 2015;95:.5. Lebec MT, Jogodka CE. The physical therapist as a musculoskeletal specialist in the emergency department. *J Orthop Sports Phys Ther.* 2009;39:221-229. 6. Di Somma S, Paladino L, Vaughan L, Lalle I, Magrini L, Magnanti M. Overcrowding in emergency departments: an international issue. *Intern Emerg Med.* 2015;10:171-175. 7. Uscher-Pines L, Pines J, Kellermann A, Gillen E, Mehrotra A. Emergency department visits for nonurgent conditions: systematic literature review. *Am J Managed Care.* 2013;19:47-59. 8. Comer GC, Liang E, Bishop JA. Lack of proficiency in musculoskeletal medicine among emergency medicine