

‘Isn’t it all Whites?’ Ethnic diversity and the physiotherapy profession

Gillian Yeowell*

Department of Health Professions, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK

Abstract

Aim To explore physiotherapists’ perceptions, views and experiences of ethnic diversity in relation to the physiotherapy profession.

Design Qualitative research study, drawing on ethnographic traditions and including ethnographic interviews. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and the data were analysed using thematic analysis. Several verification procedures were incorporated into the design to ensure quality.

Setting Venues chosen by the participants in North West England.

Participants A purposive sample of 22 physiotherapists (five students, seven clinicians and 10 academics) with a range of ethnicities.

Findings Most participants’ experiences and perceptions were of a lack of ethnic diversity within the profession. Further findings related to the impact of this included: the perception that physiotherapy is a White profession; some Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) physiotherapists felt ‘out of place’ on occasions; and failure to meet patients’ needs. The potential benefits of increased ethnic diversity and the possible risks of valuing BME staff solely in terms of their ethnicity were also illuminated by the findings.

Conclusions This study of the perceptions and experiences of physiotherapists identified a lack of ethnic diversity within the profession. It is argued that a lack of ethnic diversity may result in a failure to meet patients’ needs. A workforce that is reflective of the population it serves can have greater cultural knowledge, and is more likely to understand and respond to patients’ needs.

© 2013 Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Ethnic diversity; Black and Minority Ethnic groups; Physiotherapy; Qualitative

Introduction

Physiotherapy has traditionally been considered a White, female, middle class profession [1,2]. However, government policy over the past decade has emphasised the need to increase the diversity of staff and students in relation to health and higher education [3,4]. It is acknowledged that growth of staff from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds has been too slow and that more needs to be done [3,4]. The NHS Plan [4] highlights the need to recruit and retain BME allied health professionals, as it considers that this will provide a more effective, accessible and culturally sensitive service to BME communities and, as such, will be better placed to meet the needs of its patients. However, despite the Government’s policy to increase the number of students from

under-represented groups [3], BME groups on undergraduate physiotherapy programmes remain poorly represented.

Statistics from the 2011 Census in England and Wales revealed that 14% of the population were from BME groups [5]. In contrast, the intake of BME students on to physiotherapy courses nationally in 2010/2011 was just 10% [6]. Moreover, this is significantly below the UK average of 18% of BME students studying on university programmes in the same year [7].

Therefore, in light of the limited success of the Government’s agenda to increase the diversity of healthcare students and staff, it is important to explore the perceptions and experiences of physiotherapists in relation to ethnic diversity within the profession. However, there is a dearth of literature on this issue. Kai *et al.* [8] undertook a qualitative study to explore the experiences and challenges perceived by educators in health, including physiotherapy, in relation to training health professionals. However, there has been a significant increase in the ethnic diversity of the UK population since this study was undertaken [5]. As such, the experiences of

* Correspondence: Department of Health Professions, Manchester Metropolitan University, Elizabeth Gaskell Campus, Hathersage Road, Manchester M13 0JA, UK. Tel.: +44 161 2472961; fax: +44 161 2476328.

E-mail address: g.yeowell@mmu.ac.uk

educators may have changed. More recently, Bogg *et al.* [9] undertook a national survey to evaluate physiotherapists' personal perceptions of equality and diversity in the National Health Service (NHS) and within the profession. However, the study used a quantitative approach, which can limit the depth and understanding of people's experiences [10]. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to address this gap, and to explore physiotherapists' perceptions, views and experiences of ethnic diversity in relation to the physiotherapy profession.

Method

Sample

Participants were recruited from North West England. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who had specific characteristics or knowledge of the phenomenon of interest to enable the author to explore the research aim [10]. Participants were included in the study if they were student physiotherapists or physiotherapists working in the clinical or academic setting, and were recruited from a range of ethnicities. Physiotherapists who were unable to give informed consent were excluded. Gatekeepers, who were department heads within a higher education institution (HEI) or NHS physiotherapy managers, introduced the author to potential participants. In order to gain a holistic understanding, the author purposively selected participants from a range of ethnicities, who had a range of experience in terms of years studying or working as a physiotherapist, and experience of working with an ethnically diverse population. Recruitment of participants continued until data saturation was achieved [11]. In total, 22 participants took part in this research (see Table A, supplementary online material).

Study design

A qualitative research design was adopted, as this was the most appropriate approach to explore the research aim [10]. This involved an interpretative and naturalistic approach to the subject matter, which drew on ethnographic traditions [12]. Ethnography is the art and science of describing and interpreting a culture [11], and as such, was an appropriate methodology to explore the phenomenon of interest. Ethnographic interviews were used to generate data. The main features of these interviews are their flexible approach, which enabled the researcher to focus on issues of importance to the research aim, whilst allowing participants to discuss the issues important to them [11].

The author undertook all interviews at venues chosen by the participants. The interview questions related to the aim of this study, and provided an insight into people's thoughts and experiences. A topic guide was used to guide data generation. The guide began with collecting a biography of the

participant's ethnicity and religion in order to provide context for the interview. The topic guide included exploratory questions about the participant's perceptions, views and experiences of ethnic diversity in relation to the physiotherapy profession (see Table B, supplementary online material). Subsequent questions were conversational in nature and drew on what the participant had mentioned in their reply, whilst remaining focused on the research aim, to ensure sufficient flexibility to allow the exploration of new and unexpected issues [13].

Ethnography usually involves a variety of methods to generate data [11]. Having relied chiefly upon interviews for data generation, the author also observed the participants during periods throughout their normal working day and at social gatherings. Furthermore, analysis of existing material in relation to physiotherapy, such as prospectuses, photographs and meeting minutes, were analysed [10]. This allowed the author to gain understanding and add meaning to the interviews that would not have been apparent if interviewing had been used in isolation. The author undertook a cyclical process of data generation and analysis following each interview, which included participant observation data and reflexive memos of the author's role and how this may have impacted on the process of knowledge construction. This analysis then fed into the next interview. This article focuses on the data generated from interviews.

The author used several verification procedures to ensure the trustworthiness of this research, including prolonged engagement and observation of the participants, and triangulation of methods and sources of data. Moreover, peer review was undertaken with two academic researchers (non-physiotherapists) and two key informants (one academic physiotherapist and one physiotherapy clinician) from a range of ethnicities, who asked questions about the emerging findings and interpretations [10]. Finally, the author considered reflexively her position and biases in the research that may have impacted on the inquiry. The author is a White physiotherapy academic. This may have affected what the participants were willing to disclose, and what the author foregrounded in terms of data analysis. In cognisance of this, the author ensured that a good rapport was established with the participants and considered alternative interpretations of the data, which was facilitated by peer review.

Ethics

An application to the NHS Research Ethics Committee and the University Faculty Ethics Committee was submitted, and ethical approval was granted. This included how the author would protect the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of the participants by ensuring: protection from harm; voluntary participation; gaining informed consent; data management and storage; and maintaining confidentiality and protecting the anonymity of all those involved.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2627157>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2627157>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)