

Ethical Practices of Physical Therapy in Pakistan: A Call for Reforms

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Physical therapy has experienced exceptional growth in Pakistan over the last few years, primarily due to high demand for rehabilitation services and increased awareness of its benefits¹. However, such expansion brings an ethical debate to preserve the profession's dignity and protect the interests and well-being of patients nationwide.

One of the principal ethical issues is that physical therapy is becoming highly commercialized, which raises important questions about the responsibilities of practitioners when treating their patients². For instance, some unethical practices include prioritizing profit over patient care, using misleading advertisements about treatment outcomes, withholding essential information requiring consent, failing to provide unbiased opinions, and exposing patients to unnecessary risks. Such practices fundamentally undermine patients' ability to make informed decisions about their healthcare.

The illegal misrepresentation of professional credentials is another significant ethical dilemma in modern practice. Some technicians falsely hold themselves out as qualified physiotherapists, creating challenges for patients and undermining the profession's ethical standards. The lack of a regulatory framework enables these unethical practices, leading to inconsistent patient care. Thus, the profession remains committed to outdated or non-evidence-based treatment methods²⁻³.

Furthermore, some physical therapists use modern tools without proper certification or obtain certification by non-professional sources, poses a significant risk to both patient safety and the profession integrity⁴.

Therefore, urgent national reforms are needed to address these challenges:

- The government and stakeholders, such as the Pakistan Physical Therapy Council (PPTC), must promulgate regulations and enforce them strictly so that only qualified and registered practitioners may practice and provide services in physical therapy.
- Robust educational guidelines and mandatory certification for specialized techniques will ensure that practitioners have high technical competence and uphold ethical patient care.
- Patient education on the rights of care, ethical treatment options, and the dangers posed by unqualified practitioners will endow them with the power to make proper healthcare choices and hold practitioners accountable.
- Building a national community and peer-review systems in the physical therapy sector will provide opportunities for sharing knowledge, collaboration, and ethical accountability among practitioners.

Unless these ethical concerns are addressed, improvements in physical therapy standards in Pakistan will remain incomplete. Government bodies and professional organizations must ensure that ethical practices become the standard in Pakistan's physical therapy field.

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