

ADAPTING PRIMARY CARE REHABILITATION PRACTICE IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Thille, P.*, Brown, C.*, Tittlemier, B.*, Webber, S.*, & Kaur, D.*, Crawford, T.*, Chartrand, L.*

* College of Rehabilitation Sciences, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences at University of Manitoba

INTRODUCTION

Pandemics are disasters, with societal and health impacts beyond the immediate emergency. Disasters follow a cycle of three phases: emergency, transition and reconstruction^{1,2}. Different resources are needed at different phases.

Specific to COVID-19, both the infection and associated public health measures affect people's bodies, abilities, and mental health. Primary care clinicians are an integral part of the community health care workforce. They will need to prepare for their role in the ongoing response to COVID-19 health impacts. In Manitoba and Ontario, occupational therapists (OT), physical therapists (PT), and respiratory therapists (RT) have joined primary care teams, enhancing comprehensiveness and responsiveness of care. Manitoba and Ontario had different severities of first waves, which creates an opportunity to study variation in practice adaptation.

METHODS

- A. Literature search on the role, impact, and models for community-based rehabilitation in disasters
- B. Review and synthesis of emerging literature on physiological, psychological and functional effects of COVID-19 on patients, and of rehabilitation resources related to COVID-19
- C. Longitudinal diary-interview study^{3,4} of primary care rehabilitation professionals, applying cross-case analysis methods
- D. Knowledge Translation (2021)

PROGRESS TO DATE

Literature reviews and synthesis underway.

Recruitment complete: 15 participants

- 8 Ontario practitioners/7 Manitoba practitioners
- minimum 2 in each profession in each province

Diaries complete:

- 12 weeks of weekly or twice weekly audio diaries recorded and submitted to the research team
- Total of 265 diary entries to date
- Diary transcription to be completed in Oct 2020

PURPOSE

We aim to highlight promising strategies for adapting primary care OT, PT, and RT practice to better align services in 2021 with the ongoing health impacts from the COVID-19 disaster.

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify challenges and opportunities presented by practice and situational changes required by COVID-19 for primary care rehabilitation professionals (PC RPs) over time, and potentially across the three phases of the disaster cycle.
2. If the sample variation permits, compare the experiences of:
 - a) PC RPs by profession (occupational, physical, and respiratory therapists);
 - b) PC RPs by province (Manitoba compared to Ontario).
3. Identify and share how rehabilitation professionals can contribute to the pandemic response in primary care, and what supports they need to be able to do so.
4. To explore access impacts to primary care rehabilitation services as a result of the practice changes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DIARY QUESTIONS

1. What did you do today at work that was different than the way you did it before the COVID-19 pandemic? What, specifically, was different? How did it go? How did it make you feel?
2. What did you do at work today that was something you didn't imagine needing to do, before the COVID-19 pandemic? What was unusual about this? How did it go? How did it make you feel?
3. Describe how your practice has changed since you last journalled. How does this make you feel? What is your sense of the reason for that change?
4. How has the new work environment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic affected your work relationship with your colleagues?
5. What else would you like to share about work today?

NEXT STEPS

- Interviews with participants in Nov 2020 and Mar 2021, addressing emerging findings
- Synthesis of reviews and qualitative findings
- Knowledge translation/exchange activities

REFERENCES

1. Haas, J.E., R.W. Kates, and M.J. Bowden, *Reconstruction following disaster*. 1977.
2. Cuny, F.C., *Disasters and development*. 1983.
3. Harvey, L., *Intimate reflections: private diaries in qualitative research*. *Qualitative Research*, 2011. 11(6): p. 664-682.
4. Crozier, S.E. and C.M. Cassell, *Methodological considerations in the use of audiodiaries in work psychology: Adding to the qualitative toolkit*. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 2016. 89.

For more information, please contact
patty.thille@umanitoba.ca