

Exercise Adherence in Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy: Analysis of Patient-Physiotherapist Interaction

Patients' adherence to the home exercise program (HEP) is important for a good therapeutic outcome in physiotherapy. Nevertheless, poor adherence can often be observed. The literature provides important aspects in physiotherapy but there is a gap of knowledge about the interactional aspects regarding adherence to recommendations, in particular related to HEPs. The aim of the study was to investigate the communication strategies used by patients and physiotherapists when talking about HEP with a focus on patient's adherence (adherence-talk).

Methods: An ethnomethodological approach was chosen as framework for a conversation analytic method. Six videos-recordings from musculoskeletal physiotherapy were randomly selected from a previous project. Three consecutive treatment sessions including two patient-physiotherapists (PT) dyads were analysed. Using an inductive process, recurrent interactional sequences were identified.

Results: The results revealed verbal and nonverbal actions that patients displayed to demonstrate difficulties. Therapists responded to these these difficulties in different ways using: *acknowledgement, positive evaluation, contextualization, adaption, and more details*. Furthermore, there were utterances from the therapists identified as to promote adherence by using *negative evaluation* and *insisting*. These seven patterns, illustrated with extracts, are related to three aspects to facilitating adherence to the HEP: Improving *performance*, promoting *motivation*, and showing *empathy*.

Conclusion: The work illustrates how adherence is embedded within patient-therapist interactions. Adherence is not only about following the agreed upon recommendations, but begins with demonstrating difficulties in exercise performance. To improve adherence to HEP, interactions in therapy sessions could be applied instrumentally by the therapist and should be further explored.

Keywords: communication, physiotherapy, patient adherence, conversation analysis, qualitative research