

THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

*O FISIOTERAPEUTA NA ATENÇÃO PRIMÁRIA À SAÚDE: REVISÃO DE
LITERATURA*

*EL FISIOTERAPEUTA EN LA ATENCIÓN PRIMARIA DE SALUD: REVISIÓN DE LA
LITERATURA*

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ABSTRACT

Analyze the role of the physiotherapist and its importance in primary health care as an integral part of the family health strategy through scientific evidence regarding this. To meet the objective, an integrative review of the scientific literature was carried out. This research method enables critical evaluation and synthesis of available evidence on the topic under study, resulting in an updated study of the topic investigated and its interventions implemented effectively in health care. 135 articles were found in the databases, 37 in PubMed, 96 in VHL and 02 in SciELO. Thus, the selection was finalized with 05 articles to be read in full. It was concluded that the insertion of this professional in primary care facilitates the provision of rehabilitation care in the community, preventing the worsening of chronic conditions and meeting the population and their health needs in non-hospital environments.

Keywords: *Primary Health Care. Physiotherapy. Family Health. Family Health Strategy.*

RESUMO

Analisar a atuação do Fisioterapeuta e a sua importância na atenção primária à saúde como integrante na estratégia saúde da família. para atender o objetivo, realizou-se uma revisão integrativa da literatura científica. Este método de pesquisa possibilita avaliação crítica e a síntese das evidências disponíveis acerca da temática em estudo, tendo como resultado, o estudo atualizado do tema investigado e suas intervenções implementadas de forma efetiva na assistência à saúde. Foram encontrados 135 artigos nas bases de dados, sendo 37 na PubMed, 96 na BVS e 02 na SciELO. Assim, a seleção foi finalizada com 05 artigos para serem lidos na íntegra. concluiu-se que a inserção deste profissional na atenção primária, facilita a prestação de cuidados de reabilitação na comunidade, prevenindo o agravamento de condições crônicas e atendendo a população e suas necessidades de saúde em ambientes não hospitalares.

Descritores: *Atenção Primária à Saúde. Fisioterapia. Saúde da Família. Estratégia Saúde da Família.*

RESUMEN

Analizar el papel del fisioterapeuta y su importancia en la atención primaria de salud como parte integral de la estrategia de salud familiar. Para cumplir con el objetivo se realizó una revisión integradora de la literatura científica. Este método de investigación permite la evaluación crítica y síntesis de la evidencia disponible sobre el tema en estudio, dando como resultado un estudio actualizado del tema investigado y sus intervenciones implementadas efectivamente en el cuidado de la salud. Fueron encontrados 135 artículos en las bases de datos, 37 en PubMed, 96 en BVS y 02 en SciELO. Así, la selección quedó finalizada con 05 artículos para lectura completa. Se concluyó que la inserción de este profesional en la atención primaria facilita la prestación de cuidados de rehabilitación en la comunidad, previniendo el agravamiento de condiciones crónicas y atendiendo a la población y sus necesidades de salud en ambientes no hospitalarios.

Descritores: *Atención Primaria de Salud Fisioterapia. Salud Familiar. Estrategia de Salud Familiar.*

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INTRODUCTION

The Unified Health System (SUS) is a free health system, which was established in 1990 and, since then, has undergone many revisions and reorganizations with the aim of better organizing its scope, achieving and decentralizing its hierarchy. The system is universal, that is, anyone in Brazil can access it, including foreigners in Brazilian territory, having as doctrinal principles: universality, integrality and equity¹.

Primary Health Care (PHC) is the preferred gateway to the SUS, forming a set of health actions, in individual and collective care, whose main objective is to provide services to the population with health promotion and protection, disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and harm reduction².

In the field of primary care, there are methods aimed at resolving the health-disease process, such as: the Family Health Strategy (FHS) and the current Multiprofessional Teams in Primary Health Care (eMulti). The purpose of the FHS is to reorganize care practices, overlapping with the hospital-centered model, focusing on the promotion, prevention and recovery of the health of the family and community perceived in the territory, composed of a multidisciplinary team: Physician, Nurse, Nursing Technicians, Community Health Agents³ and, more recently, the inclusion of professionals, Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists in accordance with Law No. 14,231, of 28 October 2021⁴.

The eMulti, instituted by Ordinance No. 635, of May 22, being a substitute arrangement to the old NASF (Family Health Support Center), consists of teams composed of health professionals from different areas of knowledge who work in a complementary and integrated manner with the other teams of Primary Health Care - PHC, acting co-responsible for the population and the territory. in intersectoral articulation and with the Health Care Network – RAS⁵. The activities of the Physical Therapist in PHC may include: individual, group or home care, offering health actions at a distance, joint development of therapeutic projects, interventions in the territory, intersectoral practices, among others⁶.

It was in this context of the creation of multiprofessional teams and the inclusion of the Physical Therapist as a member of the FHS that the performance of the Physical Therapist in PHC became viable. Thus, the need for this professional is justified, considering the aging of the population and the respective increase in the prevalence of chronic diseases and conditions that require physical therapy as part of the treatment and management⁷. The presence of Physical Therapists in primary care is, therefore, essential to meet this growing demand, offering specialized care that can improve people's longevity and quality of life⁸. Based on this, the starting question of this research is: how does the role of the Physical Therapist in PHC take place and what impact is produced?

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the role of the Physical Therapist and its importance in Primary Health Care as a member of multidisciplinary teams through an integrative review.

METHODS

The study was an integrative review of the scientific literature. This research method enables the investigation, critical evaluation and synthesis of the available evidence on the theme under study, resulting in an updated study of the investigated theme and its interventions effectively implemented in health care⁹.

The databases used were Scielo, Pubmed and VHL and the descriptors established for the search were in Portuguese and English and combined with the Boolean operator AND: "Primary Health Care" and "Physiotherapy" and "Family Health" and "Family Health Strategy"; "Primary Health Care" and "Physiotherapy" and "Family Health" and "Family Health Strategy".

The inclusion criteria established were: published and indexed articles, available in full, published in Portuguese, English or Spanish and that answered the starting question about the role of the Physical Therapist and its importance in Primary Health Care in the last 10 years. Articles that did not meet the established criteria, editorials, letters to the editor, and review studies were excluded.

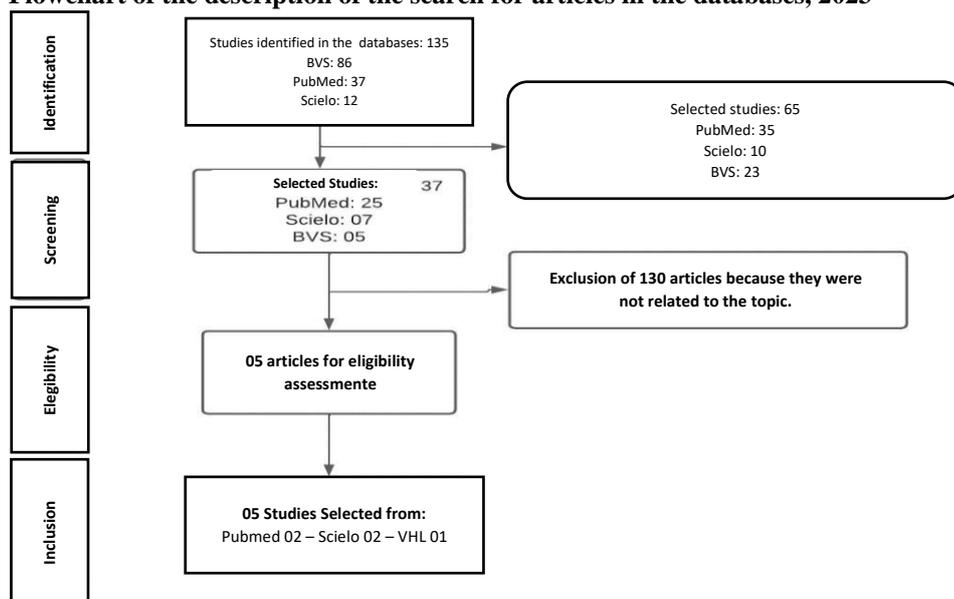
For data analysis, the thematic analysis technique was used¹⁰, so that the thematic nuclei can be understood in the construction of the study problems. Textual analysis is based on the development of a category system, a set of texts submitted for appreciation, which represents the multiplicity of worldviews of the subjects about the investigated phenomenon¹¹.

After this procedure, the studies were categorized into thematic nuclei, which enabled the interpretation and presentation of the results of the review¹².

RESULTS

A total of 135 articles were found in the databases, 37 in PubMed, 96 in the VHL and 02 in SciELO. Thus, the selection was finalized with 05 articles to be read in full (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Flowchart of the description of the search for articles in the databases, 2023



Source: Prepared by the authors.

The articles were arranged in 02 tables including: Chart 1 – authors, year and place. Table 2 – Title, author/year, objectives and main results (Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1 - Description of the articles in authors, year and place.

AUTHORS	YEAR	LOCAL
Dibai Filho, Aveiro	2022	Arapiraca, AL
Rocha, Kretzer	2021	São Paulo, SP
Yonanime, Trelha	2021	Londrina, PR
Langoni, Valmorbida, Resende	2020	Porto Alegre, RS
Figueiredo, Baracho, Vaz, Sampaio	2020	Belo Horizonte, MG

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 2 – Description of the articles used: title, author/year, objective, main findings.

TITLE	AUTHOR/YEAR	OBJECTIVES	MAIN RESULTS
Performance of the Physiotherapists of the Family Health Support Centers.	Dibai Filho, Aveiro; 2022.	To analyze the performance of Physical Therapists in the Family Health Support Centers (NASF).	Care in the NASF becomes relevant, as it assists in educational practices and health promoters.
Competencies and attributions of the physiotherapist in Primary Health Care.	Rocha, Kretzer; 2021.	Systematize the competencies and attributions of the Physiotherapists in PHC identified in the literature national and international.	Importance of strategies that make it easier to incorporation of rehabilitation actions in the ESF.
Physiotherapy in Primary Health Care.	Yonanime, Trelha; 2021.	To understand the routine and tools used by Physical Therapists in primary health care and to analyze their determinants for the production of care in a municipality that has Physical Therapists in all basic health units.	Reflection on the reorganization of the Physical therapy and pent-up demand, in search of more humanized care.
The role of the Physical Therapist in the Family Health Strategy.	Langoni, Valmorbida, Resende; 2020.	Orientate individual, weekly, units, a user's with need follow-up.	Attendances were more resolute for users who followed the guidelines, reinforcing the importance of health education.
Primary care in the prevention of female urinary incontinence.	Figueiredo, Baracho, Vaz, Sampaio; 2020.	Demonstrate the role of primary care in the prevention of female UI.	The program equipped employees to develop self-care and identify assistance needs to users.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The analysis of the studies presented reveals a growing appreciation of Physical Therapy within PHC, with a particular focus on specific competencies, impact on community health and innovations in care. Together, these studies illustrate an advance

in the integration of Physical Therapy into PHC, promoting a more preventive and educational approach that aligns with the principles of a more sustainable and accessible health. Despite the progress, the challenges of implementation and the need for continuous training remain as barriers to be overcome to maximize the impact of Physiotherapy on public health.

DISCUSSION

Considering the recent institution of the eMulti and the inclusion of the Physical Therapist in the FHS, the studies found are still in the context of the NASF, but their reflections are important to build an interprofessional performance and according to the health needs of the population.

As observed in the articles found in this review, Physical Therapists are key professionals in the rehabilitation of patients, working to restore the functionality and quality of life of individuals affected by injuries, diseases or disabilities¹⁴. In primary care, they can effectively manage chronic conditions, minimizing their consequences and promoting a more active and independent life for patients¹⁵.

The Physical Therapy professionals who were included in the program in the FHS, recently in 2021, are groups formed by professionals who aim to promote actions aimed at the community in which they are inserted, in addition to identifying the individual and collective risks and are very close to the population, given that they make home visits and know the reality of all those who are in their work environment¹⁶.

One of the objectives of the FHS is to guarantee the community access to qualified care that not only tries to treat a disease, but can prevent it before it becomes one. It is understood that with a more continuous contact, the Physical Therapist professional will develop an efficient work, thus minimizing the number of more painful treatments that would cost more both for patients and for the government¹⁷.

In the results, the activities of educational practices and health promotion, rehabilitation and health education were highlighted. This corroborates with other studies that have shown that the duties of the Physical Therapist go beyond being qualified for the rehabilitation of patients. This is a professional prepared to play a significant role in the promotion of health education, encouraging the development of autonomy and clinical self-management of individuals cared for in Primary Health Care Units (PHCUs)¹⁸.

People who have biological and musculoskeletal system alterations, resulting from their lifestyle or due to malformation, have chronic diseases, in addition to a continuous decrease in their overall capacity¹⁵. In this sense, this population needs follow-up with a professional to prevent the appearance of pathologies that could be irreversible without this follow-up, as well as to minimize the biological factors that compromise the quality of life of individuals who already have some of these diseases¹⁷.

Physical therapy treatment is of great relevance for the good performance of the individual, from birth to old age, as it influences the process of development, growth and aging. The uninterrupted changes that result from this process cause several alterations both in the functional aspect and in the structure of organs and tissues¹⁷.

They are, therefore, transformations that have repercussions throughout the organism. When it comes to an individual with pathologies, for example, their

homeostatic state may be affected, which makes them vulnerable to infections, hospitalizations, mortality, impairing their quality of life¹⁶.

Based on research studies focused on these themes, general planning was found related to the performance of Physical Therapy based on local and social contexts. In addition, the integration of these professionals in the FHS will maximize problem-solving capacity in the SUS, as it will have a qualified team to promote health based on comprehensiveness¹⁵.

It is also reinforced that there is confusion regarding the role of the Physical Therapist in the FHS, which may be due to several factors related to professional practice, academic training and low level of basic understanding of public health both by the general community and by some Physical Therapists, which does not eradicate the paradigm of this being only a rehabilitation professional¹⁶. Therefore, in order to serve this clientele, it is necessary to be efficient on the part of health professionals, so that they can enable social inclusion and promote the autonomy of the individual¹⁴.

The importance of the presence of the Physical Therapist in PHC has been widely discussed in the literature, but the team needs to be aware of the potential of Physical Therapy so that the care provided to the user can be approached in a more fruitful way, contributing to the achievement of comprehensive care¹⁹. In other countries, such as South Africa, the Physiotherapist works mainly at the secondary and tertiary levels of health, with the focus being curative and not on disease prevention and health promotion²⁰. Unlike Brazil, which, as the results of this research showed, has a focus on health promotion, protection and recovery.

Physical therapy professionals can be one of the actors in this process, contributing to efficient health care based on the principles of comprehensiveness, since they are professionals trained to investigate human movement and its functions, which enables effective human social development, improving quality of life and ensuring real effectiveness of the SUS¹⁵.

According to the above, the Physical Therapist is understood as an indispensable professional for the FHS and to produce essential care in primary care, whether individually and/or collectively¹³.

CONCLUSION

The data of this study showed the relevance of the Physical Therapist as a member of the multidisciplinary teams in PHC. The insertion of this professional facilitates the provision of rehabilitation care in the community, preventing the worsening of chronic conditions and attending to the population and its health needs in non-hospital environments.

Direct access to physiotherapy is an example of innovative primary care service delivery that is feasible, acceptable, for both users and providers and has important implications for the workload of the GP. Its effectiveness, however, must be assessed in a range of contexts before it is universally introduced.

In view of the above, the following potentialities of the work were identified: the identification of the role of the Physical Therapist in PHC contextualized to the health

needs of the population and the implementation of innovative interventions, of an interprofessional nature and with emphasis on preventive practices and health promotion.

As this is a review study, the limitations are due to possible biases of individual studies, as well as publication biases. It is suggested to carry out further studies considering the performance of the Physical Therapist in the current eMulti.

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