

**PERCEIVED PHYSIOTHERAPY INTERNS AND FACULTY
SATISFACTION WITH THE CURRENT
PHYSIOTHERAPY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

Overview: With the expansion of physiotherapy career, physiotherapists are expected to work more on the community's need and to endure in health care system, internship programs are increasingly becoming an integral part of any professional degree particularly in physiotherapy program to produce highly qualified and well prepared physiotherapist to meet those expectations. The objective of this study was to assess and report on the perceived satisfaction level of physiotherapy interns and faculty members regarding the physiotherapy internship program.

Method: In total 83 interns and 63 faculty members from King Abdulaziz Medical City, Ministry of National Guard (KAMC-NGHA), King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center (KFSH&RC) and King Fahad Medical City Hospital (KFMC), Riyadh participated in this cross sectional study. Measurements included researcher-administered and self-report questionnaires on five point Likert scale. Two sample t-tests were used to analyze the difference between the two groups. A p - value of less than 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

Results: The result revealed overall interns' and faculty satisfaction with the program. The faculty members had more concern with regards to method of instruction being employed in the

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training program. Result indicated a difference in the perception on the domain of instructions in three institutions whereas no statistically significant difference on the level of satisfaction with feedback and evaluation was found.

Conclusion: In conclusion students' and faculty members satisfaction with their internships was found to be related to feedback and evaluation of the internship experience and the assistancereceived from institution. Based on the results of this study, some implications were identified for the institutions for improvement in teaching and evaluation system and related formal training programs are recommended.

Key words: physiotherapy, satisfaction, internship, feedback, evaluation, instruction



Introduction

Globally, internship programs are very demanding and challenging with respect to developing high quality administration and creating an effective and conducive learning environment. The aims of such programs are to give student a community exposure and a chance to get real life experience in its real setting (Gupta, Burns, Schiferl, 2010; Crosbiee.al., 2002; Al Faleh, Al Furaihi, Al Rabeah, 2011).

Physiotherapy a healthcare profession demands physiotherapist to assess, diagnose and treat through physical means to maintain, restore, and to improve the physical health of an individual(Australian Physiotherapy Association; American Physical Therapy Association, 2011).In general, it is a profession that requires a commitment and better quality of treatment(Bindawas, Vennu, Azer,2013;Colbran-Smith,2010).Therefore, to get optimal level of performance and satisfaction of patients and community, internship program becomes an integral part of any physiotherapy training program to expand the expertise and skills within defined areas of practice (American Physical Therapy Association, 2011; Farzianpou et al., 2010).

Many factors are imperative for effective internship program. A research conducted on predictors of satisfaction with physiotherapy program revealed that personal, interpersonal and organizational relationship between instructor and students, number of teachers, clinical patients, instructional strategies, clinical skills, evaluation and the use of evaluation for the progress of program that student learned during internship are considered main predictors of achievement (Onigbinde, 2006). Internees' satisfaction with the services and support of senior colleagues and its positive impact on their clinical practice and employment opportunities is one of many ways to assess its effectiveness(Oyeyemi, 2001).

Although, many studies reported no significant difference between clinical and academic skills of interns (Bindawas, Vennu, Azer, 2013; Onigbinde, 2006; Haleem et al., 2011) and indicated that a clinical internship may not guarantee a competent intern required in physiotherapy(Haleem et al., 2011;Zeng, Woodhouse, Brunt, 2010),still it introduces interns to different ways of working, providing them additional flexibility and comfort with different points of view as they enter into the workforce (La Velle& Donald, 2010; World Endeavors: Intern).

In Saudi Arabia to meet the community needs, one-year internship is mandatory for all the physiotherapy students and also is a requirement of rehabilitation board (Farzianpou et al.,

2010). Institutions who offer internship program are providing broad based clinical training in several disciplines of physiotherapy. The interns are expected to display professional behavior and attitude required to practice physiotherapy in health care system. The interns' skills are assessed periodically including communication skills with faculty, staff and patients; skills in Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) and final examination. Generally, an internship consists of an exchange of services for experience between the student, an intern, and an organization.

Moreover, training physiotherapist has gone through different change phases to monitor the internship training programs in Saudi Arabia. Yet, satisfaction of Saudi interns with their internship training programs has not been assessed. Hence, in order to make a concrete and substantial basis to review, improve and develop the current physiotherapy internship program, the researchers conducted this study to determine the satisfaction level regarding the internship program at the three leading medical institutions in the Kingdom: King Abdulaziz Medical City – Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs (KAMC-MNGHA), King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center (KFSHRC) and King Fahad Medical City Hospital (KFMC), Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Materials and methods

This quantitative cross-sectional survey; as part of Masters in Medical Education Program was conducted at the Department of Physiotherapy in KAMC-MNGHA, KFSHRC and KFMC in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the month of November 2014. These institutions are approved by the Joint Commission International (JCI) as accredited organizations for their excellence in patient care, training, education and professional development. Each hospital has its Training and Development Department that offers two training programs:

1. Saudi Career Development Program (SCDP) – includes SCDP participants and trainees for the Allied Health programs. KAMC-MNGHA for two years, KFSHRC for 1 year, and KFMC, also for 1 year.
2. Internship Programs – include internship programs with the aim to develop highly skilled healthcare practitioners in the Kingdom. Each internship rotation runs for six months. KAMC-MNGHA offers admission to 30 students, KFSHRC takes 10 students and KFMC enrolls 10 students in each rotation.

The participants included in this study were 83 interns in their final rotation and 63 faculty members involved in internship program from all centers(KAMC-MNGHA, KFSHRC, and KFMC) were selected. Participants included 51 interns and 35 faculty members from KAMC-MNGHA, 13 interns and 11 faculty members from KFSHRC and 19 interns and 17 faculty members from KFMC. New interns got enrollment in September 2014 and those refused to participate were excluded from the study.

Based on literature search, two well-structured questionnaires; one for interns and second for faculty members was formulated to know the satisfaction level of interns as receiver and faculty members as provider at three different institutions. The survey was divided into two parts. In part one age, gender and experience were asked as the respondent's demographic information was gathered about. In part two, the subjects were asked to rate their perception about the internship program on a five point Likert scale. Each questionnaire consisted of 30 items divided into three imperative domains of (a) Instruction (n=12), (b) Feedback (n=08) and (c) Evaluation (n=10).

Pilot testing was done by distributing the questionnaires to new interns (N=20) under training and to faculty members who joined the department recently and were teaching new interns (N=7), to calculate the reliability and validity of the measurement tools. Questionnaires were manually distributed after their consent. All of them were invited to participate in the pilot study. All participants were aware that their participation was anonymous. All participants were asked to answer the survey with honest reflection of their satisfaction with the internship program. Few changes were made in the questionnaires. Cronbach's Alphatest was done to determine the reliability of both questionnaires. The Cronbach alpha found was 0.78 and 0.76 respectively.

The King Abdullah International Medical Research Center (KAIMRC) approved current research as masters' project. Permission from departmental heads of three centers was sought before administering the questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to Interns and faculty members in all centers. Consent was sought for using the anonymous data for reports and scientific publication. Mean and standard deviation was used for quantitative variables like age and experience. Two-sample t-test to compare the mean difference between interns and faculty membersto determine the satisfaction level was done. A $p < 0.05$ significance level was adopted in all statistical tests.

Results

In KAMC-MNGHA, 51 interns (male 19, female 32) with mean age of 22.9 ± 0.6 responded. Thirty-five faculty members (male 12, female 23) with mean age are 35 ± 6.7 responded in the study. Their mean teaching experience was 7.8 ± 6 .

In KFSHRC, 13 interns (male n=01, female n= 12) with the mean age is 22.4 ± 0.5 responded. Eleven faculty members (male 05; female 06) with the mean age are 44 ± 10 responded. Their mean teaching experience was 12 ± 9 .

At KFMC, 19 interns (male 10, female 9) with the mean age are 22.8 ± 0.7 responded. Seventeen faculty members (male, 10, female 07) with the mean age are 33 ± 5 responded on the questionnaire. Their mean teaching experience was 6 ± 5 . Please see Table 1 for the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Characteristics of Interns and Faculty Members

Groups	Hospital	Gender N (%)		Age Mean \pm SD (Median)	Teaching Experience (Years)
		Male	Female		
Interns (N=83)					
	KAMC-MNGHA (51)	19 (37)	32 (63)	22.9 ± 0.6 (23)	-
	KFSHRC (13)	1 (8)	12 (92)	22.4 ± 0.5 (22)	
	KFMC (19)	10 (53)	9 (47)	22.8 ± 0.7 (23)	
Faculty (N=63)					
	KAMC-MNGHA (35)	12 (34)	23 (66)	35 ± 6.7 (33)	7.8 ± 6 (6)
	KFSHRC (11)	5 (46)	6 (54)	44 ± 10 (43)	12 ± 9 (9)
	KFMC (17)	10 (59)	7 (41)	33 ± 5 (32)	6 ± 5 (4)

Overall Level of Satisfaction of Both Groups

Interns and faculty members' satisfaction with the important aspects related to internship, measured by using the five-point scale, shown in Table 2. Overall, interns had positive opinion on the domain of instruction used in their training program. On the other faculty members had high level of satisfaction with the evaluation system. Although not significant but mean score suggests interns and faculty members' high satisfaction with the use of feedback in internship program (M = 4.01, SD = 0.47; M = 4.01, SD = 0.44 respectively).

Table 2: Mean Scores Comparison between the Groups Satisfaction on Different Domains

Domains	Groups Mean + SD (Median)		
	Interns (N=83)	Faculty (N=63)	p-value*
Instruction	3.86 ± 0.38 (3.9)	3.80 ± 0.4 (3.8)	0.99
Feedback	4.01 ± 0.47 (4)	4.01 ± 0.44 (4)	0.59
Evaluation	3.72 ± 0.45 (3.6)	3.83 ± 0.48 (3.8)	0.58

* Independent t-test, p-value <0.05 as significant

Gender wise Level of Satisfaction of Interns and Faculty Members

Gender wise satisfaction with the internship program shown in Table 3. The mean scores of male interns' were found higher with regards to satisfaction with the domains of instruction and evaluation than their counterparts. Both male and female interns had positive opinion towards the feedback. Although, no significant difference was found on the satisfaction levels of the male and female faculty members but mean scores revealed that male faculty members' had more positive perception for instructional strategies and feedback program in internship program in comparison to female faculty members.

Table 3: A Comparison of Interns and Faculty Level of Satisfaction with Physiotherapy Internship Program Based on Gender

Groups	Domains	Gender Mean + SD (Median)		p-value*
		Male	Female	
Interns N=83				
	Instruction	3.96 + 0.4 (4)	3.81 + 0.37 (3.8)	0.08
	Feedback	4 + 0.5 (4)	4 + 0.46 (4)	0.76
	Evaluation	3.83 + 0.49 (3.7)	3.65 + 0.41 (3.6)	0.30
Faculty N=63				
	Instruction	3.85 + 0.38 (3.9)	3.75 + 0.41 (3.8)	0.33
	Feedback	4.03 + 0.48 (4.1)	4 + 0.42 (4)	0.83
	Evaluation	3.86 + 0.47 (3.8)	3.82 + 0.49 (3.8)	0.74

* Independent t-test, p-value <0.05 as significant

Institution wise Level of Satisfaction of Interns and Faculty Members

The ratings of study groups' on the domains of internship program institution wise are as shown in Table 4. It was found that overall (KAMC-MNGHA, KFSHRC, KFMC) the difference between the perception on the satisfaction levels of interns and faculty members on the use of instruction were statistically significant ($p= 0.03$; $p<0.05$). On the other hand, the satisfaction of two groups regarding feedback ($p= 0.07$; $p>0.05$) and evaluation ($p= 0.23$; $p>0.05$) were statistically not significant. In addition, Mean \pm SD scores showed that KFMC interns had high satisfaction with the internship program than KFSHRC who reported low level satisfaction on instruction and evaluation domains. Interns from KAMC-MNGHA had low positive opinion for system of feedback used in their respective institution.

It is noted that overall the difference between the faculty members' perception on internship program at three institutions were not statistically significant. Mean \pm SD showed that the faculty members from KFMC and KAMC-MNGHA had the most positive perception on the use of instruction, feedback and evaluation. Faculty members from KFSHRC had shown low satisfaction with feedback and evaluation areas.

Table 4: A Comparison of Interns and Faculty Level of Satisfaction with Physiotherapy Internship Program Based on Institution

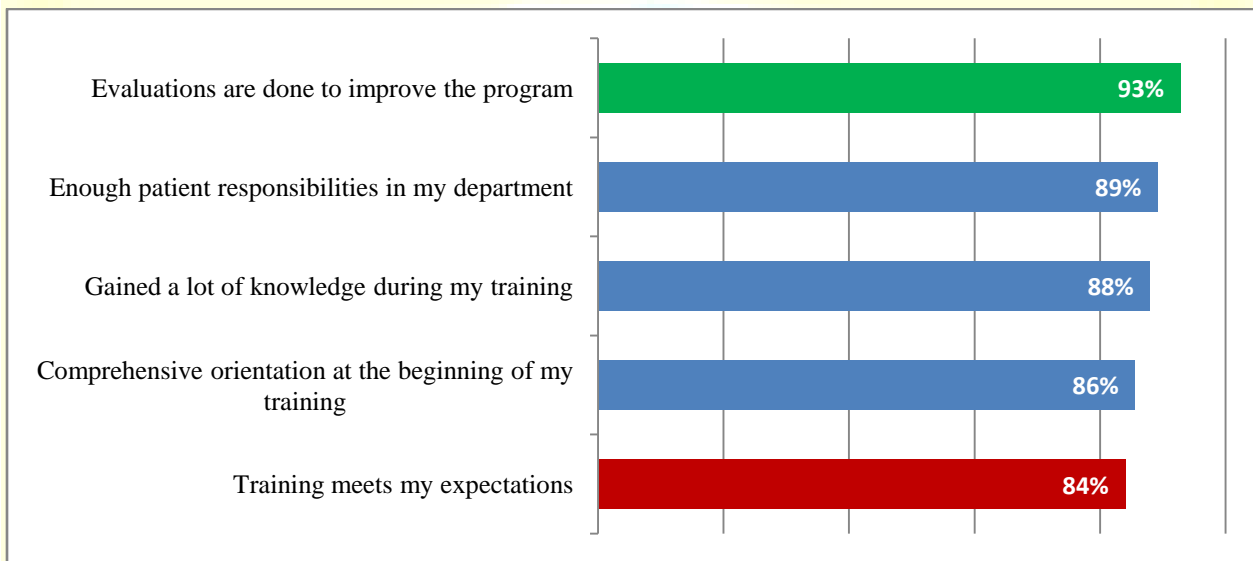
Groups	Domains	KAMC-MNGHA	KFSHRC	KFMC	p-value*
		Mean \pm SD (Median)	Mean \pm SD (Median)	Mean \pm SD (Median)	
Interns (N=83)					
	Instruction	3.9 \pm 0.36 (3.92)	3.6 \pm 0.34 (3.54)	3.9 \pm 0.4 (4)	0.03
	Feedback	3.94 \pm 0.5 (3.94)	3.96 \pm 0.22 (4)	4.23 \pm 0.49 (4.43)	0.07
	Evaluation	3.72 \pm 0.36 (3.72)	3.54 \pm 0.60 (3.6)	3.82 \pm 0.52 (3.8)	0.23
Faculty (N=63)					
	Instruction	3.74 \pm 0.42 (3.69)	3.76 \pm 0.39 (3.8)	3.95 \pm 0.33 (4)	0.19
	Feedback	4.02 \pm 0.48 (4.1)	3.9 \pm 0.37 (3.86)	4.07 \pm 0.41 (4.1)	0.60
	Evaluation	3.81 \pm 0.45 (3.8)	3.68 \pm 0.49 (3.67)	3.97 \pm 0.51 (3.9)	0.28

*ANOVA, p-value <0.05 as significant

Statements with Highest percent Level of Satisfaction of Interns

Figure 1 shows analysis of the interns' responses with regards to the statements with the highest percentage of satisfaction. Out of eighty three interns involved in the study, 93% had shown higher level of satisfaction with the use of evaluation to improve the program. In addition, students need concerning the patient exposure in their respective departments, as whole most interneers (89%) had shown their satisfaction on getting enough patients responsibilities and training that met their expectations (86%).

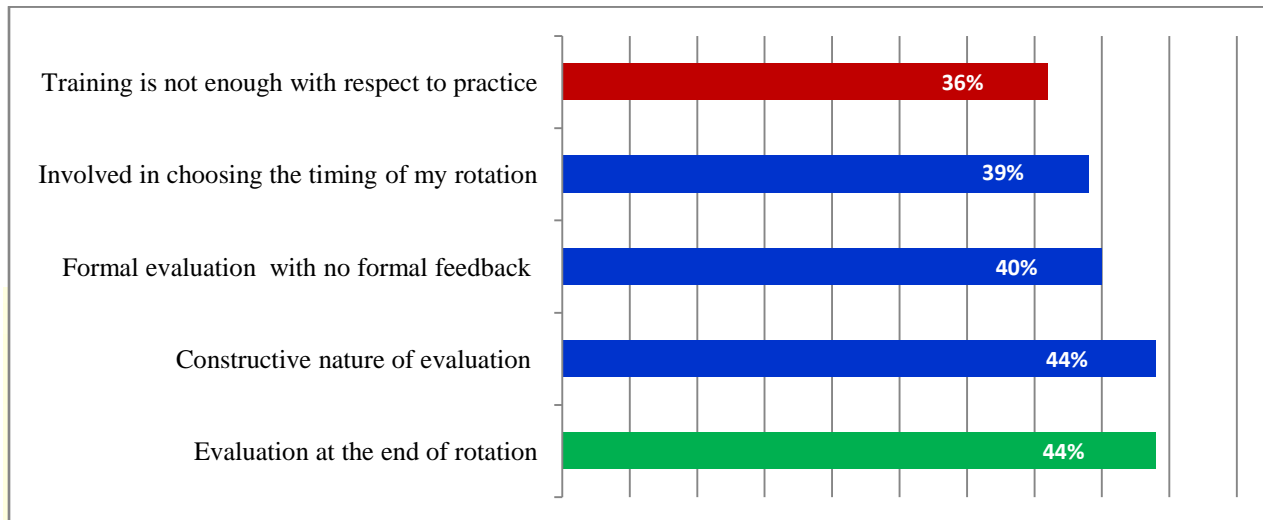
Figure 1: Questions with Highest Percentage of Satisfaction with the Internship (Interns)



Statements with Lowest percent Level of Satisfaction of Interns

Students' rating on the internship program and dissatisfaction with some aspects are as shown in Figure 2. Forty four percent interns had lower level of satisfaction with the statement of using evaluations at the end of the program and its positive impact on interns' performance. With regards to the formal evaluation followed by formal feedback and utilizing interns in the training program, it was revealed that the interns rated low on these areas (40% and 39% respectively).

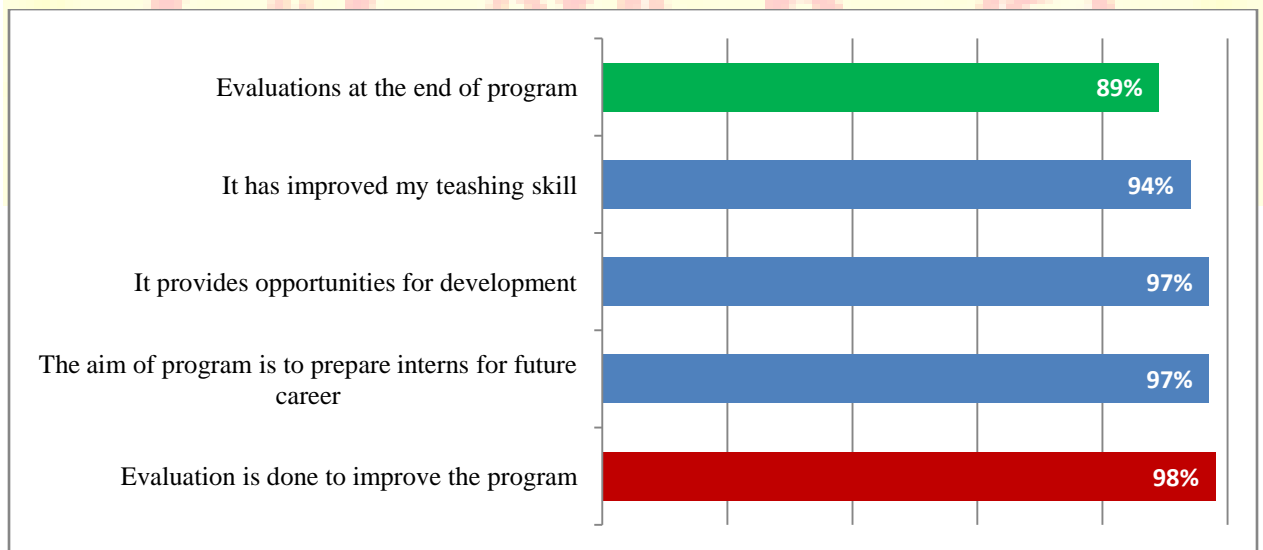
Figure 2: Questions with Lowest Percentage of Satisfaction with the Internship (Interns)



Statements with Highest percent Level of Satisfaction of Faculty Members

Analysis of the faculty members' responses with the highest percentage of satisfaction with internship program are shown as in Figure 3. Out of 63 physiotherapy faculty members involved in this study, Sixty-two (98%) showed their satisfaction on the use of evaluations to improve the internship program. Majority (97%) believed that program's aim met the need of internship program, had provided good training opportunities to interns and also opportunity to improve teaching skills (94%).

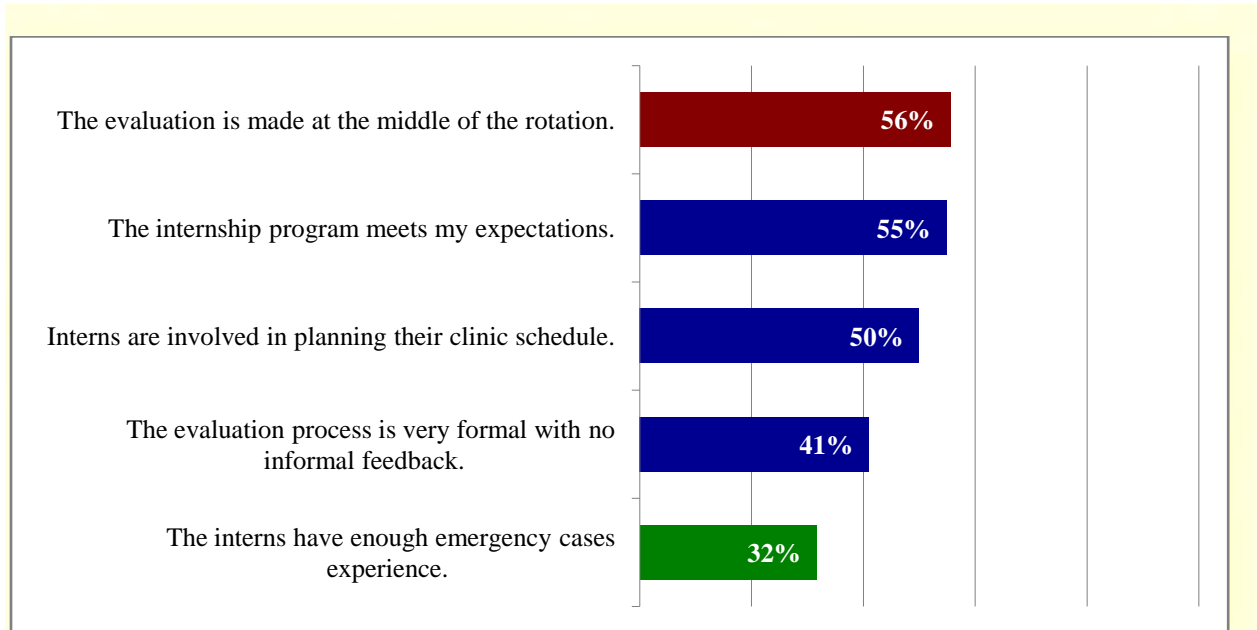
Figure 3: Questions with Highest Percentage of Satisfaction with the Internship (Faculty Members)



Statements with Lowest percent Level of Satisfaction of Faculty Members

Figure 4 showed analysis of faculty members' response with regard to lowest percentage of satisfaction. In this study it is found that 56% had their concern about the evaluation to be conducted in the middle of rotation and involvement of interns in the process of program development (50%).

Figure 4: Questions with Lowest Percentage of Satisfaction with the Internship (Faculty Members)



Discussion

The general objective of any internship program in academic institution is to provide support and proper advice to students looking for opportunities in their respective fields. The result of this study revealed, that overall interns of respective institutions were found to have a high satisfaction on the aspect of instruction of internship program. On the other hand, their satisfaction was less positive on the domains of evaluation and feedback. Perhaps, this dissatisfaction is the result of lack of trust and awareness of evaluation and feedback system. These findings are supported by the Worrall (2007) study which pointed out that the orientation before the start of any program may help students to focus on learning outcomes and to enhance the quality of student learning. This is an extremely critical time to prepare a well-trained professional able to accommodate with real situation and able to apply the learning on patients of different problems (Gupta, Burns, Schiferl, 2010).

It was found in this study that as a whole, physiotherapy faculty was fully satisfied with the domains of physiotherapy program. They were aware of the essence of their part in the internship program, not only in teaching and supervision, but more importantly in evaluating the interns' competencies and skills and preparing interns to become a competent and effective physical therapist in the future. This awareness not only secure the quality standards promoted and implemented by the profession but also provided them with an eagerness to improve themselves as mentors for future physiotherapists. Moreover, on one variable of evaluation they rated highly on evaluation being conducted at the end of the rotation. This may signify that the need for the interns to be evaluated at the beginning of the rotation is not anymore necessary because they already have the foundation knowledge of the profession unlike the interns who are just starting their clinical immersions. However, interns emphasized on the use of periodic and formal evaluation along with formal and informal feedback for improvement. Mean analysis clearly reflect that students are largely dissatisfied with evaluation system conducted at the end of rotation, which validate the fact that well developed evaluation system throughout the program are required. In these domains, no difference of opinion has been reported among interns and faculty members.

On probing, the finding of present study reflects that teachers and interns have a positive experience towards several key variables of the training program. These areas were: students' need of seeing enough patients and learning their responsibilities, gaining knowledge and the trainings in their department of interest. This high satisfaction reflects that institutions are aware of students and community's need and also their role in order to develop competent and effective physical therapists in their respective fields. Some strategic areas that need profound attention of faculty members and head of the departments observed were; evaluation process, feedback and expansion of the interns' immersion to emergency cases.

For many years, physiotherapists are engaged in the evaluation of clinical practice in clinical care (Huijbregts, Kay, Klinck, 2008). Although interns had shown their satisfaction with the evaluation program is in use but still it provides visions for school administration and other stake holders in further improvement of program and of teacher performance. Moreover, to probe the satisfaction level of the interns with feedback system, interns have unanimously declared that they are dissatisfied with the feedback part of the program. This reflects positive attitude of interns towards receiving feedback for their personal and professional development; however,

there is a need to improve the feedback skills of the faculty members, incorporate it in the training program and need to conduct workshops on feedback skills. Previous studies reported that direct observation and constructive feedback can improve interns care skills by encouraging and giving advices to them (Shelesky et al., 2012).The feedback can be effective by establishing respectful learning environment, objective feedback, direct observation, making it regular event, focusing on performance, and create and developing chances for staff (van der Leeuw&Slootweg, 2013)

On comparison with gender, mean scores of male interns showed their satisfaction with the instruction and evaluation part of internship program as compared to female interns. Possibly, this difference of perception is because of the fact that female interns failed to recognize the nature, role and quality of teaching and evaluation they had received during their internship.

Results are similar to previous study done by Tijs et al. (2012) that reported a positive attitude of physiotherapist towards developing a culture of evaluation and assessment in institutions. Although it is challenging to implement an evaluation culture nevertheless is an important component for the transition to an educational culture.

The findings of this study show that the efforts of Rehabilitation Board of Saudi Arabia to encourage institutions to develop and implement program to improve physical therapy education in the region had a successful impact on faculty members and interns' perception. However, it is not completely successful. Interns and faculty members still demanded improvement in some aspects of program like the importance of evaluations even at the beginning of their rotation as to establish the basis or foundation of their knowledge and skills; need of evaluation process to be more beneficial and less critical; and their involvement in planning rotation. Therefore it is imperative that from the beginning faculty and students should be involved in the process of developing content for the training program.

Furthermore, interns and faculty members' low satisfaction with different aspects of training program indicate the efforts should be made in the domains associated with internship program including curriculum content, evaluation and implementation that will benefit interns in them in community practice.

Limitations

This study has been based, as in many previous ones on self-report data rather than upon actual training evaluation practice.The questionnaire that has been used in this study needs further

development by including the factors important for professional and personal development. The study possesses several limitations which may limit the generalizability of the results.

Conclusion and recommendations

Students' and faculty members were highly satisfied with the current internship program and their high satisfaction was found to be related to feedback, instruction and evaluation of the internship program. Based on the results of this study, some implications were identified for the institutions for improvement in teaching and evaluation system and related formal training programs are recommended. The lowest satisfaction with the program may signify that still several issues and concerns must be promptly and reasonably resolved and addressed not only for the benefit of the interns and faculty, but more so to their present and future patients that will need and demand quality health care. It suggests that all the faculty and interns should participate in training process to draw up a well-established training program considering the finding of this research that provides the perception of the interns on the delivered services, and offers a picture of intern's perception and expectations beside what they actually experience in their program.

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