E-Poster

EP-892

Improving Rehabilitation Access in Ghana: Family Physician rotations in Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine

Topic: Education (Medical Student, Residency & Post-Graduate)

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BACKGROUND

With a growing need for rehabilitation services, Ghana has historically struggled with a lack of specialized rehabilitation professionals, relying mainly on physical therapists. The recent graduation of the first Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (PRM) physician in 2021, under the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, highlighted the need for increased PRM expertise. To improve patient identification and referral for rehabilitation, a clinical PRM rotation program for Family Physicians was instituted as they are the first point of contact for patients at health facilities. This study presents the program's reach and its potential to foster interest in PRM as a fellowship opportunity for family physicians and ultimately expand rehabilitation provision in Ghana.

METHODS

A structured PRM rotation program was established under the GCPS in 2023 at a hospital in Ghana. Family physicians participated in clinical rotations of 2-4 weeks, gaining clinical exposure to various rehabilitation interventions, didactic sessions, and interactive group discussions, fostering collaborative learning and knowledge exchange. The participants also received mentorship from an experienced rehabilitation physician beyond the rotation. To ensure the acquisition of core competencies and understanding of the program's content, family physicians underwent an examination at the conclusion of their training, evaluating their ability to apply basic PRM principles in clinical practice.

RESULTS

Since March 2023, 18 family physicians have successfully completed the PRM clinical rotation program, with their participation and acquired skills documented in their logbooks. The family physicians gained expertise in functional history taking, needs assessment, navigating the Ghanaian rehabilitation network for referrals, and advocating for rehabilitation. The program has expanded its scope to include clinical rotations for physicians training in geriatrics recognizing the overlapping needs of elderly patients and the importance of rehabilitation in geriatric care. There has also been a significant increase in rehabilitation referrals originating from family physicians who have participated in the clinical rotation program. This surge in referrals signifies a direct impact of the training on clinical practice, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in enhancing patient access to rehabilitation services.

CONCLUSION

Integrating family physician rotations within PRM departments offers a promising pathway to increase PRM awareness, the need for rehabilitation and improve access to care in Ghana. By exposing family physicians to PRM, this program fosters interest in the specialty, expands the network of healthcare professionals capable of providing basic rehabilitation interventions, and strengthens referral

Statement of Disclosures

None

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Doi: 10.5606/archisprm.2026.EP-892