



COVID-19: Physiotherapy Students' Experiences During Practice Placement in The United Kingdom



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Introduction

Through extensive search of the literature, to date, no other study has explored the perspectives of physiotherapy students' undergoing a practice placement during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research aimed to explore the factors that contribute to students' adaptability and resilience during challenging times in healthcare. This is particularly pertinent to current students as we see ongoing struggles globally in health and social care. Doing so can inform current and prospective students of the realities of practice placement. Support HEI's and educators to implement strategies to manage challenges, better support and prepare students for future practice.



Interviews

Focus Area	Sample Interview Questions
Background	Please describe your experience in managing COVID positive patients on placement?
Personal Response	How did you personally respond to managing COVID positive patients?
Coping Strategies	Did you use any strategies to cope with the psychosocial needs of both yourself and the patients?
Challenges	What are the biggest challenges you faced during this time?
Support	Do you feel that you had all the resources and support you required?



Discussion

Discussion

Adaptability to the Unknown

'I kept thinking did I wash my hands? ...lots of obsessive thinking. [P1]'

We Are All in This Together

'I felt I'm on the same level as everyone else in the team. [P5]'

Uncertainty of the Rapidly Changing Environment

'Every week there was a different protocol in place [P3]'

To Treat Versus to Protect

'I tried to empathize and put myself in the patients' shoes. [P2]'

Methodology

	Design	Qualitative approach.
	Participants	4 MSc pre-registration and 2 BSc physiotherapy students.
	Data Collection	Semi-structured interviews recorded on Microsoft Teams.
	Analysis	Inductive thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Participants

Sample Size	Gender	Level of Study	Age (Years)	Domestic	International	Sampling	Level of placement (P)	Non-participation
6	Female Male	MSc BSc	22-32	4	2	Purpose	P2 P3	0
	4 2	4 2					5 1	

Findings

Adaptability to the Unknown

- Adaptation
- Front-line anxiety
- Comfort & Personal Safety

Uncertainty of the Rapidly Changing Environment

- Uncertainty
- Barriers to communication

We Are All in This Together

- Collaborative Working
- Learning Experience

To Treat Versus to Protect

- Patient Centered Care
- Desire to Protect



Conclusion

HEI's & Practice Placement Sites

Improve organisational communication, acknowledge the perspectives of educators, promote experiential learning, flatten hierarchies, and recognise the barriers of PPE.

UK Government

Acknowledge concerns and implement consistent infection control measures to provide safety and reassurance for individuals.