



ASSESSING THE NEED OF PHYSICAL THERAPY IN THE SALT LAKE CITY HOMELESS POPULATION

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Context: Overall health and wellness of a population relies on numerous different social, economic, and environmental factors. Among these factors is healthcare and maintaining physical and mental health of a given population. Specifically, the homeless population is unique in that the most common healthcare needs relate to drug and alcohol dependence, or mental illness. Another issue for socioeconomic reasons lower income populations are more likely to be associated with having chronic pain conditions (pain lasting more than 3 months), and overall functional limitations. Physical therapy is a tool that healthcare uses to provide to patients with musculoskeletal conditions. Increasing research suggests that treatment by a physical therapist is often an equally effective and cheaper alternative to surgery and prescription drugs.

Objective: Our research goals comprise of assessing the need for physical therapy among the homeless. We want to find out if they have pain lasting for more than three months and to see if there quality of life is affected by it.

Design: Anonymous survey/questionnaire research.

Patients or Other Participants: Anonymously selected, 18 years and older and of the homeless population.

Main Outcome Measures: After data collection we will be able to determine the amount of chronic pain and physical limitations the population has. From the questionnaire we will be able to location and types of pain, the loss of function that may be attributed to the pain, and distinguish between male and female disparities. Using these observations we can assess the needs of physical therapy within the homeless population of Salt Lake City.

Conclusions: This study is just the beginning of the process of one day having physical therapy in the downtown area of Salt Lake City, Utah where the homeless can walk in and receive treatment. The future research will include a more in-depth look at the types of musculoskeletal injuries and amounts of each, putting interventions in place such as volunteer physical therapists treating a small group of homeless, and eventually studying the effectiveness of the care given compared to alternatives.

