
PHYSICAL AND REHABILITATION MEDICINE: PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Aydan Oral

Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Istanbul Faculty of Medicine,
Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey

Rehabilitation is predicted to be the key health strategy of the 21st century due to the aging of the world population and the increase in prevalence of non-communicable diseases which could lead to problems in functioning and disability in a substantial proportion of the world population (1). World Health Organization (WHO) launched the initiative of "Rehabilitation 2030" and introduced a "call for action" for scaling up and strengthening rehabilitation. Within the framework of "Rehabilitation 2030", the significant role of rehabilitation was emphasized for the effective implementation of important projects such as the "Global Strategy and Action Plan on Aging and Health", the "Mental Health Action Plan", "Integrated Individual-Oriented Health Services" and the "Global Cooperation Initiative in Assistive Technology" (2). A recent analysis, a marking point for rehabilitation, demonstrated that one in every three people is living with a health condition that benefits from rehabilitation which makes the prioritization of rehabilitation necessary to address functioning needs (3). These developments put Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (PRM), known as the "medicine of functioning" (1), in the spotlight with the responsibility to move forward to respond to the increasing needs for rehabilitation of the growing population of people with problems in functioning and disabilities.

Major PRM bodies-European Academy of Rehabilitation Medicine, European Society of PRM (ESPRM), European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS-PRM Section & Board), European College of PRM - served by the UEMS-PRM Board, join forces and work together as well as in cooperation with the International Society of PRM (ISPRM) and the WHO for strengthening PRM targeting the three pillars a medical specialty is built on: core values and principles, knowledge content, and scientific research.

One important action of these PRM bodies was the publication of the 3rd Edition of the "White Book on PRM in Europe" in 2018, which not only comprehensively defines and states the importance of PRM in health care systems

as well as field of competence of PRM, but also serves as educational material for PRM physicians (4).

Since 2009, the UEMS PRM Section- Professional Practice Committee is producing Evidence-Based Position Papers designating the professional role of PRM physicians in diverse health conditions aiming to improve knowledge content and competencies (5).

The European Board of PRM is committed to the harmonization of PRM training throughout Europe by defining basic elements of training including theoretical knowledge and core competencies as well as maintenance of a standard level of education through certifications (6).

Scientific societies are operational structures that play a significant role in the advancement of medical specialties. The ESPRM has a strong tradition of organizing congresses which bring scientists together and foster the formation of a common identity, which also aim to spread knowledge in PRM and to recognize diverse research within the huge breadth of the specialty (7).

Research, as an integral part of a profession, presents a special cruciality for PRM to understand the problems faced by persons with disabilities and to define the underlying mechanisms of impairment, activity limitations, and participation restrictions as well as benefits of rehabilitation interventions to inform our clinical decisions (8). Studies show that both the quantity and quality of research in PRM have been improving within the last two decades (9). The absolute number of scientific publications is growing in rehabilitation and research evidence is continuously increasing in PRM at a higher rate than in other treatment fields such as drug therapy (9). Regarding evidence-based practice to improve quality of care in rehabilitation, Cochrane Rehabilitation contributes to the growth of PRM in terms of knowledge translation and uptake of evidence-based practices (10). ESPRM "Special Interest Scientific Committees" also serve in promoting research in specific areas as well as improving evidence-based practice in PRM.

The knowledge in our specialty is also enriched by spreading through journals (7). Additionally, exponentially increasing scientific discoveries and developments in technology can contribute to the application of innovative rehabilitation strategies for the benefit of people with disabilities (9).

In conclusion, the scientific activities required to support the knowledge base and rehabilitation practices in PRM have improved significantly and continue to improve with an increasing momentum for strengthening rehabilitation to meet the needs of the population in need of rehabilitation.

Key words: rehabilitation, physical and rehabilitation medicine, functioning, disability

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