

# Attitudes to work and work environment management in lifetime practice: A questionnaire -based study for physiotherapists working in the private sector in Greece

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## ABSTRACT

### Aim

The purpose of this study is to investigate attitudes to work which are related with the individual's background and personality, to outline the career choices and postgraduate education, the management of work environment in lifetime practice, and finally the fitness level and general health status in a sample of Greek physiotherapists (PTs) who work in the private sector in Greece.

### Methods

A fairly representative random sample of 60 (mean age 42.8±8.13 years) PTs, who comprise the 26.67% of the total number of PTs who live in Thessaloniki (Northern Greece) participated in this study. Each PT owned a private Physiotherapy Center (PTC) and possessed a minimum experience of 8 years. In the presence of two researchers, the participants filled out a questionnaire that included 51 questions about their demographic and personal background, educational status, working conditions, attitudes to work, fitness level and overall health.

### Results

The 15% of the participants held masters degrees and the 75% was specialized in one or more physiotherapy techniques such as the McKenzie's (35%). The 60% owned the PTC they worked for (the women in particular, had their PTCs located near their homes). The 50% was able to pay for one employee and only the 5% was able to pay two employees although work requirements called for at least one or more members of staff. Many participants declared the need of extra private insurance (52.5%) in order to supplement their medical care needs. Moreover, 78% worked five days a week, 55% of PTs held part time positions, while 45% were employed full time. Also the considerable amount of 65% treated patients in their own homes. The 87.5% (male: 85%, females: 90%) of PTs, claimed that their income is sufficient enough to satisfy their professional needs. Concerning

their professional dress code, it is the women PTs who mainly used to wear medical clogs and lab coats. In the therapy rooms they used similar light brightness. As far as a PT's posture is concerned, 55% used to work in an upright position, most of whom were women (65%). Asking about health problems we observed that, the areas most vulnerable to pain were the neck and the lumbar. Asking about their past fitness activities, there was found that the 43% were actually athletes in the past; at the interview they assessed their fitness level as good but the 52.5% actually believed that needed improvement (male: 45%, female 60%). According to our findings, a significant percentage was corresponding to regular smokers.

### Conclusions

This study suggests that Greek physiotherapists show a good balance between work needs, education and family life; on the other hand, fitness activities are not antagonistic in life planning. Greek PTs tend to specialize in classical techniques of major interest for patients and seek postgraduate education very often. The management of work environment in lifetime practice seems to be in satisfactory levels, and finally the fitness level and general health status is found to be satisfactory in terms of self-evaluation. The occupational health problems are not examined in systematic basis and preventive measures are taken on individual basis only.

**Keywords:** physical therapy, private sector, physical therapy techniques, occupational health, attitudes to work, work environment management.

### INTRODUCTION

In Greece there are few vacant working posts for physiotherapists (PTs) in Public and Private Hospitals and Clinics. Thus most Greek Physiotherapists, after receiving their degree and obtaining a work permit, go on to work privately. In the initial stages of work experience, they tend to practise physiotherapy by visiting the patient's home and later usually proceed to opening their own Physiotherapy Center (PTC). The PTC is initially rented but often subsequently purchased. This is due to the fact that a Greek child is raised in a culture which stresses the importance of seeking private housing. It is evident that the particular culture of manners and customs of Greek society and its firm social structures play an important role in

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