

Physiotherapy Education During COVID–19: A Jordanian Experience

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bachelor of Science in physiotherapy is a four-year program that has been offered at The University of Jordan since 1999. Just like all other educational programs across the world, teaching pedagogy in this program underwent a major overhaul due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this chapter, the changes implemented in this program due to the pandemic and a discussion of their different aspects are presented. First, an overview of traditional teaching model and all the changes it underwent during the first year of the pandemic are presented. After that, specific aspects of the changes are addressed in depth and discussed in light of evidence from the literature. These include changes made to clinical and practical education, modifications of assessment methods, and responses and adjustments of students and faculty members. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future implementation of online teaching in physiotherapy education.

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ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The University of Jordan, established in the year 1962 by a royal decree from the belated King Hussein of Jordan, is the largest and oldest institute of higher education in Jordan. This public university is located in the capital city, Amman, in the heart of Jordan. The university includes 24 schools which offer around 250 different programs ranging from B.Sc., M.Sc., and Ph.D. in various specialties. In addition, the university includes various institutes (Institute of Archaeology, Social Work Institute, etc.), centers (Language Center, Stem Therapy Center, etc.), and a large hospital (University of Jordan Hospital). Programs offered by the university are generally classified under three streams; humanitarian (business, art, law, etc.), scientific (engineering, science, agriculture, etc.), and medical (medicine, dentistry, rehabilitation, etc.). Being the largest university in Jordan, more than 35,000 students are enrolled at the university. The more than 200,000 university alumni are among the top ranked graduates in the region with high employability rate.

The School of Rehabilitation Sciences at the university was established in 1999 and houses four departments; physiotherapy, occupational therapy, prosthetics and orthotics, and hearing and speech therapy. The Department of Physiotherapy offers two degrees; B.Sc. and M.Sc., the latter was started in 2019. In addition, the department started a new M.Sc. program in athletic therapy in 2021. The B.Sc. program has been granted Full Accreditation by World Physiotherapy (the international organization representing the profession of physiotherapy). Each year around 90 students are enrolled in the B.Sc. program. The twelve PhD-holding faculty members at the department (including the authors of this chapter) are graduates from the program who were granted scholarships by the university to complete their graduate studies at universities in the United States, Canada, and United Kingdom and have been teaching at the department since then. In addition, teaching assistant staff who hold M.Sc. and B.Sc. degree assist in the education of students during practical labs and clinical training.

SETTING THE STAGE

Physiotherapy practice and its education are rooted in manual contact and physical proximity especially during applied courses (World Physiotherapy, 2019). For decades, physiotherapy educators were used to teach, supervise, and assess the practical skills of their students in face-to-face format. Among the wide-scale changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which include what appear to be long-lasting effects on every single aspect of human life, education, and that of physiotherapy in particular, are substantially impacted (Crawford et al., 2020). While at the very

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