The Meaning of Manual Therapy in the Practice of Musculoskeletal Physiotherapists: A Thematic Analysis

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Introduction

• The Research Question
• Qualitative research paradigm
• Participants
• Data Analysis
• Results
• Conclusion
• Implications
The Research Question

• Manual therapy is constrained within a narrow framework of biological principles (Nichols & Gibson 2010).

• The bio mechanistic paradigm ignores the societal, cultural, existential and philosophical possibilities of the therapeutic encounter (Bjorbaekmo & Mengshoel, 2016).

• A variety of knowledge is needed to underpin practice (Petty, Thompson, & Stew, 2012).
Qualitative Methodology
Method & Participants

• Ethical approval was granted by the University of Brighton, School of Health Sciences, School Research Ethics and Governance Panel

• Seven participants recruited

• 1:1 semi-structured interviews which were audio-taped and transcribed
Interview and Data analysis

- Thematic analysis was used to generate themes to represent the data set as described by (Braun and Clarke (2006)).

- Iterative and Inductive Process based on six phases involving data familiarisation, coding, categorisation, condensing, theme generation
Results

Manual Therapy as Individualised Care
- Hands on interaction
- Meeting patient expectations
- Therapeutic alliance

Manual Therapy as a Journey
- Skill
- Practice knowledge

Manual Therapy as Discord
- Research results are different to those in practice
- Physiotherapy Profession is under threat
Manual Therapy as Individualised Care

- Hands on interaction
- Meeting patients expectations
- Therapeutic alliance

“Helping somebody to change themselves...by using a way of interacting with their bodies in a way that you can’t do just by talking to them.” (Frank)
'As I’ve moved on as a physiotherapist I’ve had some ups and downs with manual therapy. Sometimes I think it’s the best thing. Sometimes I think it hasn’t got too much use or it’s useless.' (Charlie)
Manual Therapy as Discord

Research results are different to those in practice

Physiotherapy Profession is under threat

‘It’s become a big problem...arguing the hands on/hands off debate...its missing the broader aspects of what we’re talking about manual therapy as being...it’s one of those black and white arguments that doesn’t really help the profession at all.’ (Eddie)
Discussion


• Bricolage approach to complex problems using different forms of knowledge (Shaw et al 2012)

• Manual therapy as a haptic (Field 2011).

• Therapeutic Touch (Moffatt and Kerry, 2017, Bjorbaekmo & Mengshoel, 2016)
Conclusion

• Manual therapy is so much more than hands on for most of these participants.

• This study finding suggest that manual therapy is interaction as well as intervention.

• The use of manual therapy described in this study reflects the ‘therapeutic touch’ that our profession is built on.
Limitations and Recommendations

• MSc study
• Novice sole researcher
• Further research on this topic and concept
• More qualitative research on physiotherapists conceptions of practice.