

„Patient self-referral“ – Developing a method to identify unconsidered competencies in different German educational systems

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The continuous upgrading of professional competence and standing of German physiotherapists have brought up a demand for extending their professional autonomy. Introducing direct access to physiotherapy in Germany will require a generalized optimization of the physiotherapist's competence in order to reach international standards.

PURPOSE

Developing a method to identify unconsidered competencies in different German educational systems required for working autonomously in the concept of patient self-referral (PSR).

METHOD

- 1) A literature research and guided expert interviews with Australian lecturers were conducted in order to highlight the challenges in the concept of patient self-referral.
- 2) With the help of various internationally and nationally recognized statements a specific method of analyzing the educational needs of German physiotherapists was developed.

STATUS TARGET

Competencies First Contact Practitioner (n = 85)			
Professional competence		Personal competence	
Knowledge	Skills	Social competence	Autonomy

STATUS QUO

Competencies German Physiotherapist
Profile 1: State examination (3 years vocational course)
Profile 2: Bachelor's degree (University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück)

n= numbers of competencies described in the European Physiotherapy Benchmark Statement [1]; transformed into the matrix of the German Qualifications Framework [2]

[3], [4]

NEEDS ANALYSIS

RESULTS

Evaluation of needs analysis

Competencies n = 85	Existent	Insufficient regarding PSR	Educational Need
State examination	41	31	44 (13)
B.Sc. Osnabrück	60	21	25 (4*)

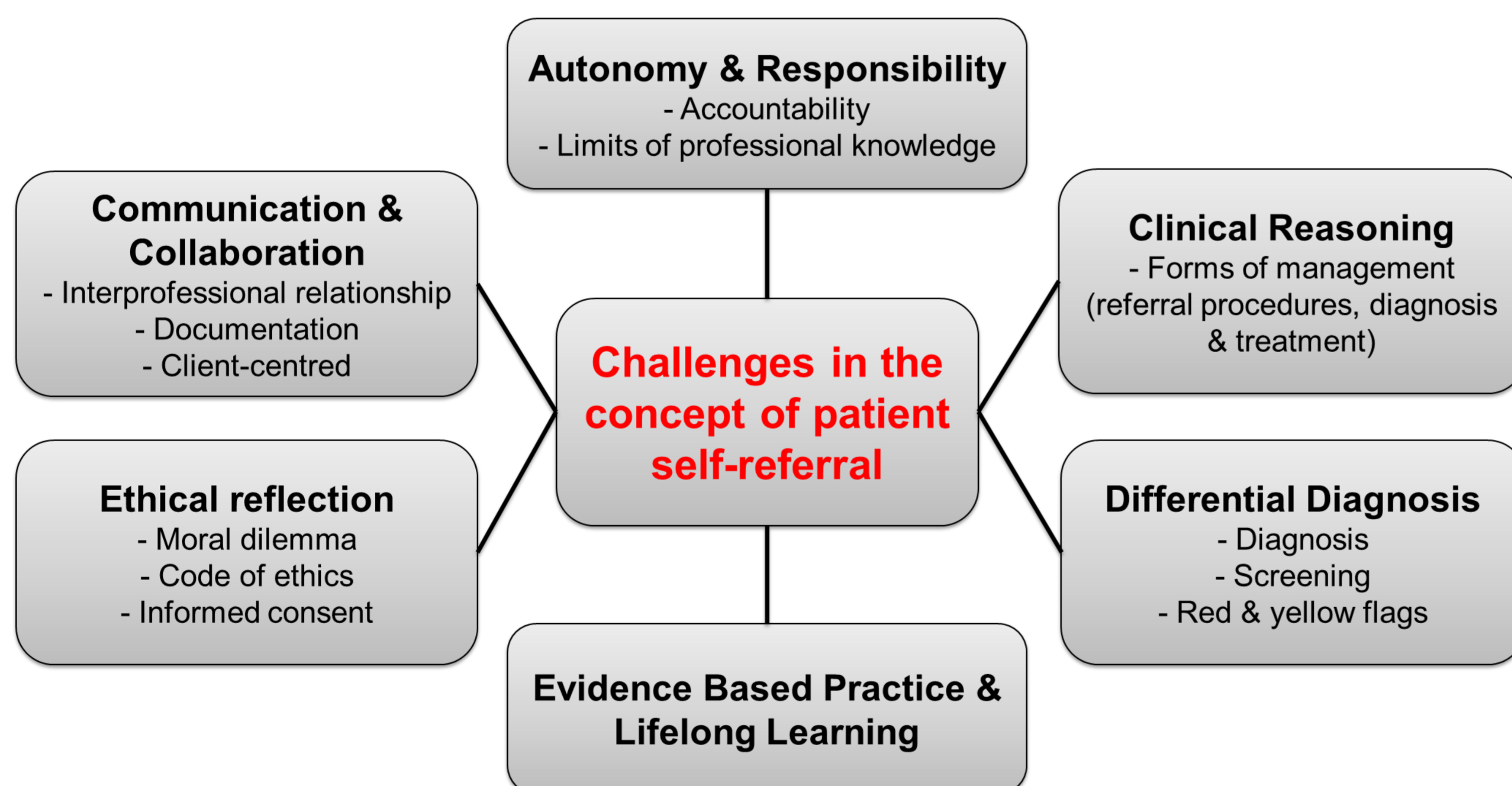


Figure: categories based on recent literature and experts statements.

The identified deficits relate to the new demands within the system of patient self-referral:

- The ethical, legal and professional issues that inform and shape physiotherapy practice
- Personal and professional development: confidence, managing uncertainty, change and stress
- Decision making, clinical reasoning and problem solving skills

* The highest demand on curricular adjustment:

1. Forming a diagnosis on the basis of physiotherapy assessment
2. Acknowledge cross-professional boundaries and employ appropriate referral procedures
3. Appreciate the significance of professional self-regulation
4. Deploy and manage support staff effectively and efficiently

CONCLUSIONS

- Introducing patient self-referral can be challenging. The performed needs analysis can be seen as a potential way in which to describe the current competency levels of German physiotherapists.
- German physiotherapists seem to be well prepared in the profession-specific skills and demonstrate solid knowledge of physiotherapy on a scientific basis as well as in the context of service delivery and professional practice.
- Unconsidered competencies were detected within the fields of professional and personal competence but mainly relate to the new demands within the system of patient self-referral.
- These findings might be helpful in the development of an education program for physiotherapy within Germany that qualifies a student to practice as an independent professional in a system that makes patients and their decision-making as the focus.
- Using the European Physiotherapy Benchmark Statement [1] and the matrix of the German Qualifications Framework [2] increases the transparency and comparability within Europe.

REFERENCES

[1] ER-WCPT. European Physiotherapy Benchmark Statement. Barcelona. Spain, 2003. [2] DQR. Expert evaluations of the working groups for the second phase of development of the German Qualifications Framework. Berlin; 2010. [3] ZVK. ZVK-Curriculum. Zur Ausbildung von Physiotherapeuten. CD-Rom, Auflage 8, Köln; 2008. [4] Hochschule Osnabrück. Modulhandbuch der Hochschule Osnabrück, Stand 01.06.2011.