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On the question of interpretation of main terms associated with physical rehabilitation.

Andrew Hertsyk

Rapid development of physical rehabilitation as an independent educational and professional field in Ukraine actualized the problem of shaping and development of the concept of this profession.

Our analysis showed that, despite of more than a decade of experience and developments in this field, there still exists lack of understanding and common interpretation of the key concepts, such as physical rehabilitation and specialist of physical rehabilitation among health care specialists including social workers and representatives of educational programs.

Here’s a list of the most common, in our opinion, inaccuracies and mistakes associated with the terms:

1. The terms medical treatment and physical reh­abilitation are often arbitrarily substituted, confused or used as those of the opposite meaning.
2. A specialist of physical rehabilitation is a masseur with a university degree.
3. A specialist of physical rehabilitation is a doctor (or sports doctor).
4. Physical rehabilitation activities are fundamentally different from physical education.

In order to clear up the question of interpretation of the key terms, we studied local and foreign specialized scientific, methodological and educational literature, reference books and dictionaries of various types and purpose, as well as laws and policies.

In modern Ukrainian scientific and methodological literature the question of terminology is partially covered, in the works of: V. V. Abramov and V. V. Klapchuk, A. S. Vovkanych, O. D. Dubogay, T. Y. Krutsevych, V. O. Kuksa, V. P. Murza, V. M. Mukhin, L. P. Sushchenko.

The meaning of the term rehabilitation in modern Ukrainian and English sources is presented almost identically. According to the definition in the Ukrainian-Latin-English medical thesaurus, rehabilitation – is “a complex of activities aimed at restoration of body functions and performance of patients and the disabled”. The interpretation of the term rehabilitation, provided by the World Health Organization is more detailed, but very close to the formulation provided above. In the given definition it is emphasized that rehabilitation is a focused and limited in time process.

New Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus of English Language describes rehabilitation as restoring of lost functions, including restoring physical functions with the help of exercise and training.

One of the key documents that define the meaning of rehabilitation on an international level is the “Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly (resolution № 48/96 of December 20, 1993) and signed by the Ukrainian delegation. This document, besides the aforementioned characteristics of the rehabilitation process, stresses that rehabilitation does not include first aid activities.

V. M. Mukhin in his book “Physical Rehabilitation” provides the following definition of the term: physical rehabilitation is a complex of medical treatment, physical exercise and natural factors aimed at restoring health, physical condition and ability to work of persons with disabilities. He lists the following means of rehabilitation: physical exercise and education, therapeutic massage, physiotherapy, medico-mechanic therapy and labor therapy.

T. Y. Krutsevych, identifies physical rehabilitation as “a complex of activities aimed at restoring lost or weakened body functions after an illness or an injury and a variety of Physical Education”, he notes that any change of physical abilities of a person in the required direction is a pedagogical process. According to V. P. Murza, the main group of physical rehabilitation activities is exercise. G. J. Verych supported by his co-authors says that physical exercises play the leading part in physical rehabilitation process. L. P. Sushchenko also sees exercise as main means to restore damaged subsystems of the human body. The author defines the same types of professional knowledge and professional activity in physical education and physical rehabilitation.

V. P. Murza and V. M. Mukhin in their scientific works indicate that the method of application of exercise in rehabilitation should be based on fundamental didactic principles (awareness and activeness, visualization, accessibility, personalization, systematic approach and strength). A. S. Vovkanych believes that specialists of physical rehabilitation should be trained as teachers in the field of restoring physical activity and adopting physical abilities of persons with disabilities.

In the modern Ukrainian scientific literature that has been reviewed, we found similar views as to what persons belong to the target group of physical rehabilitation. Various authors defined the following groups:

- disabled persons and persons with poor health;
- disabled people with functional disabilities, chronically ill, reconvalescents, pupils and students with special medical needs;
• patients;
• people with disabilities;
• patients in post treatment phase;
• people who have suffered disasters, accidents, stress;
• sick and disabled athletes who were injured or whose health has deteriorated because of irrational physical training and sports.

The question of the sphere (field work – defining tasks of professional activities and professional description of the types of services he/she can provide) of a specialist of physical rehabilitation activity, modern scientific works cover partially and comments on this topic can actually be found only in a few works.

In particular V. M. Mukhin says that a specialist of physical rehabilitation develops methods of using physical exercise as well as plans their implementation within functional restoration programs. O. Alekseev says that a specialist of physical rehabilitation performs rehabilitation activities and evaluates their effectiveness. Usually in the scientific works which study activities of a specialist of physical rehabilitation, the authors provide limited description, or just a list of specific methods of rehabilitation. The question of distribution of responsibilities between a specialist of physical rehabilitation and a doctor remains open.

According to V. M. Mukhin physical rehabilitation is a part of medical treatment and should be proscribed by a doctor. V. Savchenko and V. Klapchuk note that physical rehabilitation is not only performed as a part of a medical treatment. Other scientists are not inclined to oppose physical rehabilitation and drug-pharmacological treatment and believe that the work of a specialist of physical rehabilitation should be planned in partnership with doctors and only such joint activities will significantly improve the health of the nation.

Thus, analysis of the professional literature shows the following:
1. Physical rehabilitation is the pedagogical process.
2. A specialist of physical rehabilitation is a specialist of body motor activity.
3. The subject of physical rehabilitation is a person with poor health and motor disorders.
4. The primary goal of physical rehabilitation is restoring lost motor function due to injury or disease and health promotion.
5. The main means of rehabilitation is exercise.
6. The question of the area/field of activity of a specialist of physical rehabilitation requires further studies.

(The article will be continued in the next issue of the newsletter)

References:
The term “physical rehabilitation”, is widely being used in consumer and professional language, however, there is great ambiguity of its definition and its’ scope in the whole system of health care activities.

The aim of physical rehabilitation is to restore, compensate and develop new physical, psychological, social and other skills that will enable an individual to live a full life and be an active member of the society, taking into account personal and environmental changes.

First steps in establishing “physical rehabilitation” as a profession by taking on the training of physical rehabilitation specialists was done by the then Lviv State Institute (now University) of Physical Education. Here at the Institute, as a result of the efforts of the Scientific Secretary of the Institute A. Vovkanych and a highly qualified Canadian physiotherapist of Ukrainian origin, O. Kunanec, a partnership was instituted with Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) within the framework of the “Partners in Health Program” which resulted in the “Rehabilitation Program in Lviv” Project.

The goal of the project was to provide assistance to the Institute to develop and implement an educational program in physical rehabilitation, the first of this kind in Ukraine. The curriculum was composed from a combination of disciplines from physical and occupational therapy, within the specialty areas of orthopaedics, neurology, paediatrics, gerontology and cardio-respiratory care.

The following Canadian organizations were partners in the project: Community Based Rehabilitation Development Centre of Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario; McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario; and the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Significant assistance to the project was provided by the Centre for Disability Studies, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the “Children of Chernobyl Canadian Fund”, Toronto, Ontario.

The cooperation was being regulated by agreements made between the Institute and the program «Partners in Health Care System» which were signed in December, 1994 and December, 1995 and were in force until the end of 1997. During this period, 11 Canadian experts conducted lectures and workshops for students of the Institute. They also led the students in their clinical practice. Five graduates of the program and teachers of the Institute continued their studies in Canada at the University of Manitoba.

In 1998, graduates of the University training program founded the Ukrainian Regional Association of Specialists of Physical Rehabilitation. The goals of the Association were to unite specialists of physical rehabilitation to establish their profession, to develop standards of practice for specialists of physical rehabilitation and define their scope of practise, as well as, promote professional development of the specialists and the scientific of physical rehabilitation.

In 2002, with support of the project “Facilitating the Rights of Children With Special Needs”, funded by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain Human Rights Program, the Association translated and published the book “Fundamentals of Physical Rehabilitation” by G. Okamoto, and conducted a workshop and published handbook on myocardial infarct and rehabilitation.

In 2004, the Association participated in another Canadian-Ukrainian project, “Gender Sensitive Rehabilitation and Care of People with Disabilities, in Ukraine’. Within the framework of this project the Association translated the video and “Hands On Health Care” and created the video “Safe Mobilization for Everyone”. Also, two educational booklets were published by the Association: “What Is Physical Rehabilitation and what does a Specialist of Physical Rehabilitation Do” and “Lviv Regional Association of Specialists of Physical Rehabilitation and Its’ Activities”.

The Association also worked on lobbying interests of the Profession and consumers at the state level. Numerous efforts to address institutions and state ministries at the highest level undertaken by LOASPR were marginally successful. The maximum achievement of the efforts is a letter issued by the Minister of Health, V. F. Moskalenko V. F. This document, to a small degree establishes a place of work for physical rehabilitation specialists in the health care institutions which are subordinated to the Ministry of Health.


...After consideration of the appeal of the Lviv Board of Health of the Lviv Oblast State Administration regarding introduction and implementation of active physical rehabilitation programs for the patients with spine injuries and spinal cord lesion, and given the requirements of Order of Ministry of Health of Ukraine dated 25.12.92, № 195 “On approving the list of higher and secondary specialized educational institutions and obtaining the title which licences to engage in medical and pharmaceutical activities”.

I am making the following Proposal:

- If necessary, in specialized medical institutions, to create positions for specialists in physical rehabilitation (in accordance with paragraph 2 of the Order of the Ministry of
1. Develop standards of practice for specialists of physical rehabilitation in Ukraine.

2. Submit appeals to the ministries asking for permission for the Association of SPR to participate in the development of legal documents related to rehabilitation services in Ukraine.

3. Adapt the Code of Ethics, make proposals and amendments, and discuss it at the next meeting.

Today LOASPR is implementing a large-scale project “MATRA” (Ukraine - Netherlands), which has defined the main strategies of the Association, which are:

• Development of professional standards
• Establishing a management system and looking for funding options;
• Increasing community awareness and cooperation with authorities;
• Creating a system of professional development of specialists of physical rehabilitation.

To insures further development, UASPR joined Ukrainian non-governmental socio-political organization, “National Assembly of People with Disabilities of Ukraine”, which unites non-governmental organizations representing the interests of people with disabilities, and consolidates their efforts to improve the situation of people with disabilities in Ukraine. The Association also intends to become a full member of the World Confederation of Physiotherapists in order to gain support of the professional community in the process of shaping and developing the profession of specialist of physical rehabilitation in Ukraine.
MATRA Project «Improving quality of life and standards of services for disabled children through the development and building civil society in Ukraine»

History

In 2006, Henry Nouwen Fund from the Netherlands addressed the experts from Lviv Education Rehabilitation Center “Dzherelo” for children with cerebral palsy to develop a rehabilitation program for disabled children from “internats” of the 3rd and 4th type (which are orphanages for children with mild physical disabilities but severe mental disorders and for children with severe physical disabilities but varying degrees of mental retardation) which have been receiving humanitarian aid, and conduct training for the personnel of the institution. The task was very difficult because, as it turned out after several visits to these institutions, the children there were not receiving any services in the field of physical, psychological or social rehabilitation. Permanent stay in bed led to very severe physical and psychological condition, of so called “bed-patients” or “hopeless” children. Insufficient number of personnel without special knowledge and skills of how to take care of such children was even worsening the difficult situation. Organizing training for staff of such institutions required involvement of experienced professionals in the field of rehabilitation. Representatives of SOFT Tulip Foundation from the Netherlands, which is a network of providers of services for disabled people, and which collaborates with the Dzherelo Education and Rehabilitation Center for many years, having learned the situation offered their partnership and in 2007 began work on developing an international project MATRA.

During the years of 2007-2008 Lviv Regional Association of Physical Rehabilitation Specialists in cooperation with the Netherlands Foundation “Socires” worked on developing a network and coordination of activities of Ukrainian and international organizations which promoted improving the life quality, services and protection of rights of severely disabled children in residential institutions such as “internats”.

MATRA project in action

MATRA Project “Improving quality of life and standards of services for disabled children through the development and building civil society in Ukraine”, supported by the government of Netherlands, started on the 1st of October 2008 and will continue for 3 years. The following Ukrainian organizations joined the project: the National Assembly of Disabled of Ukraine, the Lviv Children Education and Rehabilitation Center “Dzherelo” and the Lviv Regional Association of Physical Rehabilitation Specialists. The Dutch partners of the project are: SOFT Tulip Foundation, Socires Fund and the Royal Dutch Association of Physical Rehabilitation Specialists.

Project Objectives:

Provide high quality rehabilitation services and encourage integration of children with disabilities into the society through building capacity of such services providers, strengthening civil society and necessary policy changes.

The following activities are planned to be done within this project regarding policy changes: to analyze national laws and regulations related to childhood issues, social protection of children with disabilities and their families, assessment of the declared rights and ways of their implementation; to make a comparison of the national standards to the EU and UN standards of protection of children with disabilities; preparation of proposals for development of necessary legislation changes and appropriate regulations.

One of the practical results of the project will be development and conduction of 4-day training “Basis of treatment of disabled children” by the specialists of the Education and Rehabilitation Center “Dzherelo” together with the experts from the Netherlands. The training will be organized for the staff of the type 3 and 4 internats which are coordinated and controlled by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.

This course will be based on modern, scientifically proven and practically tested in the European countries methods of rehabilitation of disabled children. The staff of the internats will acquire knowledge and skills required for the effective care and rehabilitation of disabled children.

There’s another training planned to be held at the “Dzherelo” center for personnel of the “Early Intervention” programs from different regions of Ukraine which will help to provide better services to families in which disabled children are born. The project thus aims at the development of high quality local services as a better alternative to residential institutions for disabled children such as “internats”.

The above introduced project envisages the development of the Ukrainian Association of Specialists of Physical Rehabilitation, which will facilitate the recognition of status, modernization and standardization of the profession of physical rehabilitation specialist.

Within the framework of the project the following activities are planned:
The first general meeting of the Ukrainian Association of Specialists of Physical Rehabilitation took place in Lviv on April 11, 2008. The meeting was attended by representatives of fourteen regions of Ukraine.

The Constitution of the Association, which was registered with the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine on December 13, 2007, was introduced to the audience.

One of the highlights of the meeting was a presentation on specific activities and area of work of specialists of physical rehabilitation. This topic was presented in the context of combined foreign experience and local practices, from the point of view of physical rehabilitation specialists who are working in the areas of: orthopaedics, spinal cord injuries, acute cerebral circulatory disorders, respiratory disorders, and paediatrics.

Following the presentation and discussion it was decided that there is an acute need for documents which would determine and regulate activities of a specialist of physical rehabilitation in Ukraine. As a result, the following decision was made: to develop standards of professional activity of physical rehabilitation specialists in Ukraine based on the requirements of the World Confederation of Physiotherapists.

Another issue brought up for discussion at the meeting was the legal status of the profession of physical rehabilitation specialists in Ukraine.

Unfortunately, we must admit that there are no legislative documents which would provide legal regulation and security for the activity of physical rehabilitation specialists in Ukraine today. One of the basic problems is lack of legislative support for the activities of specialists of physical rehabilitation, ie staff compliments, in health care institutions of the country. Another very important problem is lack of educational standards for specialists of physical rehabilitation. It was also noted that the legal aspect of physical rehabilitation activity as a medical practice in relevant to the area and Ministry of social services and protection. There are a number of documents in the process of development and ratification which coordinate the rehabilitation of people with disabilities, but the ideas and recommendations of specialists of physical rehabilitation are not being taken into account. Therefore it was decided that there is a real need to participate actively in the development of such regulations which would coordinate services in physical rehabilitation sphere.

Following the discussion, it was decided that the Association would address the ministries of health, Social Protection and Education with a request to allow representatives from the Association of Specialists of Physical Rehabilitation to join them in the process of development of legal documents related to physical rehabilitation services in Ukraine.

A draft of a Professional Ethics Code for specialists of physical rehabilitation of Ukraine was introduced to the participants at the meeting. The draft was developed on the basis of the Code of Ethics of the World Confederation of Physiotherapists and has been approved by Lviv Regional Association of physical rehabilitation specialists. After presenting the draft to the members, it was agreed that they would review the proposed Code...
of Ethics and prepare proposals and amendments to the draft document for consideration at the next annual general meeting.

Other issues that were discussed at the meeting were related to the organization of work, documentation and cooperation between the various centres/divisions.

In conclusion, the Ukrainian Association of Specialists of Physical Rehabilitation has taken on the mission to shape and develop the profession and it’s status, and to attempt to overcome the numerous unresolved problems relating to legislation.

Announcement

UASFR invites organizations and our colleagues of specialists of physical rehabilitation from different regions of Ukraine, including representatives from: Volyn’, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kirovohrad, Odesa, Poltava, Ternopil, Cherkasy, Chernivtsi, Chernihiv and the city of Sevastopol to join us.