

# 6<sup>th</sup> World Nursing and Healthcare Conference

August 15-17, 2016 London, UK

## Equality, accessibility and availability of physical therapy services in Israel: Perception of national directors

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To date no research has described Israeli Physical Therapy (PT) services to determine whether they are provided in the spirit intended by the National Health Care Law (NHCL). This study aimed to assess the equality, accessibility, and availability of PT services in Israel. Qualitative research was based on semi-structured personal interviews with all national directors of PT services in Israel, followed by content analysis of the data obtained. According to the findings, PT services are provided by all HMOs throughout Israel. In peripheral areas, access to services is limited; availability of services at most clinics is poor, aspect problem which is solved mainly by referring patients to PT outsourcing. The number of treatment sessions are determined by the NHCL, however, all directors agreed that the number of treatments should be a professional decision following patient evaluation and progress, rather than by administrative considerations. Inequality of service to peripheral areas could be reduced by creating cooperation between HMOs, thereby establishing clinics capable of providing accessible and equitable services. In addition, the number of sessions provided to patients in the health-care basket should be reassessed and a set of uniform criteria should be created for determining the optimal number of PT sessions. This could lead to greater uniformity in distribution of PT services provided by the HMOs.

### Biography

Tamar Jacob, PT, MPH, PhD, is a registered Physiotherapist. She has completed her Master's and PhD degrees in Public Health from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She is the Head of the Masters' program at the Physiotherapy Department in Ariel University, Israel. She has published more than 30 papers in peer reviewed journals and has been serving as the Editor of the *Journal of the Israeli Physiotherapy Society*. She has been engaged in education of physiotherapy students for over 30 years. Her present main research areas are education in physiotherapy and physiotherapy services in Israel.

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