

Virtual Physio, a Digital Solution for Treating Musculoskeletal Disorders during Covid-19

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Abstract

Workplace absences have historically been caused by musculoskeletal (MSK) diseases. Employers should once again consider their approach as the factors related to Covid-19 are anticipated to increase the occurrence of such issues while also making in-person appointments more difficult to get.

Keywords: Musculoskeletal; Virtual physio; Covid; Pandemic

Introduction

“MSK concerns are a ticking time bomb,” says Brett Hill, distribution director at Towergate Health & Protection. We must solve them now, before an entire generation of employees suffers from MSK illnesses as a result of Covid limits. This necessitates a rethinking of how we approach this type of care need. For many people, virtual physiotherapy could be the answer. Virtual physiotherapy is possible and effective, which may surprise some employers.” [1]

Factors Connected to Covid

Working from home is likely to have resulted in an uptick in MSK problems. While some employees may have a dedicated home office, others will be forced to work from their kitchen table, a small nook, or even their sofa or bed. This can only lead to worsen the things. Even in the office, hot-desking and shared workspaces mean that desks and seats are no longer customized to the needs of each individual. This, combined with an increase in the amount of time spent at a desk, indicates that MSK problems impact employees of all generations.

The Scope of the Issue

Prior to the pandemic, the 2019/2020 Labour Force Survey revealed that 480,000 workers had MSK problems at work, resulting in a loss of 8.9 million working days. Manual handling remained the leading cause of MSK disease, however it was followed by awkward or tiring positions, keyboard work, or repeated activity. All of these things are just going to get worse if Covid-factors arrive.

Problem-Solving Ideas

Access to physiotherapy is a critical first step. Physiotherapy, which focuses on the biomechanical and structural rehabilitation of the individual, can alleviate and even cure many MSK diseases. Access to physiotherapy has grown increasingly difficult as a result of the pandemic limitations, resulting in a significant backlog. While Covid is to blame for the delays and may also be to blame for an increase in MSK concerns, the circumstance has, ironically, expedited the creation of some of the answers [2,3].

Digital Expansion

Employees have learned to maximize the internet’s potential as a result of the pandemic. Video conferencing has become the standard, and internet choices have been employed in places where they were previously considered impractical. Indeed, scheduling a doctor’s appointment online has become normal. Physiotherapy can also be accessed online in the same way.

Using Virtual Physiotherapy

“At first glance, virtual physiotherapy may appear to be a weird concept, as physiotherapy is often considered as a very hands-on profession,” explains Brett Hill. “However, manual treatment is only one aspect of a clinician’s job. Virtual physiotherapy can examine and treat the majority of non-complex MSK disorders, and businesses should embrace online care because of the time savings.”

Tried and Tested Solution

Indeed, Ascenti conducted a study of 27,000 virtual physiotherapy patients who sought help before and during the Covid epidemic, and came to the conclusion that digital physiotherapy must become a substantial component of the therapeutic mix after Covid. Patients’ receptivity to virtual treatment, pain improvements, and satisfaction with outcomes were all documented in the study by the independent physiotherapy provider. It was discovered that virtual physiotherapy is equally as beneficial, if not more so, than in-person treatment [4].

Advantages of Virtual Physio

- Convenience – no travel time is required. There is no need for childcare or time off work.
- Patient engagement – as a result of not receiving manual therapy, the patient realizes that it is up to them to manage their own rehabilitation. This sense of responsibility can be very motivating for the patient to complete the activities assigned to them.
- Insight into the situation at home and at work. A virtual appointment allows the clinician to learn more about the patient’s home and/or work surroundings. They can check out the available equipment and space, as well as the working setup.
- Patient-centred treatment – virtual physiotherapy allows for a more holistic patient-centered approach, as the format encourages more discussion.

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- Digital tools - Apps can give patients with a variety of helpful resources such as demonstration films, goal-setting tools, progress monitors, and reminders.
- Appropriate referrals - computerized triage cuts down on wasted time and increases efficiency.

Conclusion

“In the last year or two, we’ve discovered that digital solutions can help businesses save time and money. Virtual physiotherapy is yet another illustration of how companies may work smarter rather than harder. Physiotherapy can and does work online, and now is

the moment for businesses to embrace a new approach to the MSK problem, which will only get worse.”

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