



**University of
Sunderland**

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Background

Higher Education Institutions must adequately prepare the student for clinical practice. Specialist skills aren't required at entry level although physiotherapists are required to meet the needs of service users throughout lifespan. There is no current standardised approach to teaching paediatric content in the UK. Global guidance on recommended and essential paediatric content for Physical Therapy entry level programs is provided by the World Confederation¹. A greater awareness of specialties such as paediatrics is supported by guidance from the KNOWBEST project². Entry level graduates may have a first post in a paediatric setting so require an underpinning knowledge of child development and an awareness of paediatric conditions³.

Methods

A cross sectional questionnaire of UK HEI's was conducted (ethical approval: ID9279)

59 Institutions were identified as providing entry level physiotherapy programmes (82 programmes in total)

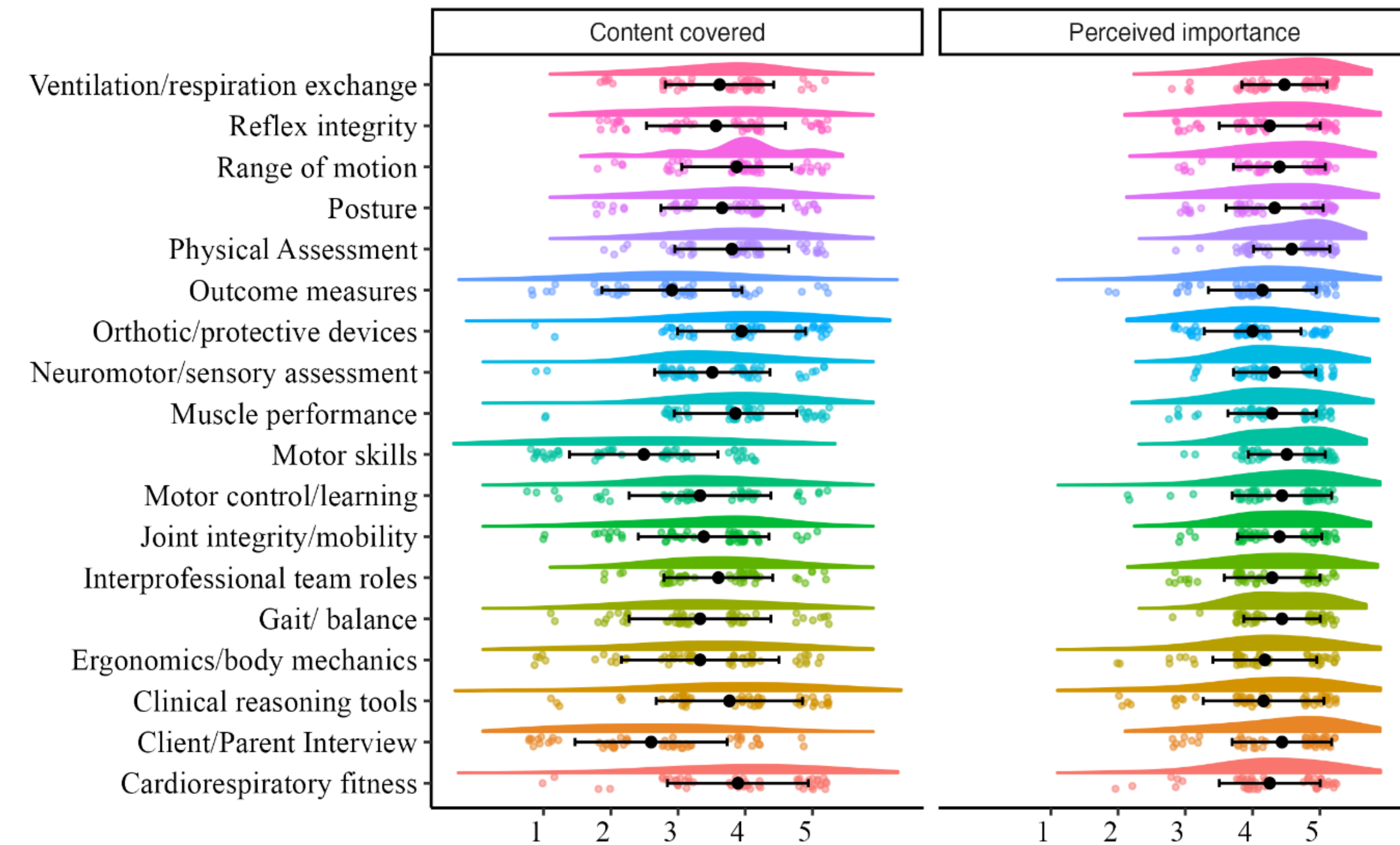
71 programme Leaders and 6 departmental contacts were invited via email to complete the survey.

Measures: The survey based on the work of Mistry (2019)⁴, was separated into four subsections:

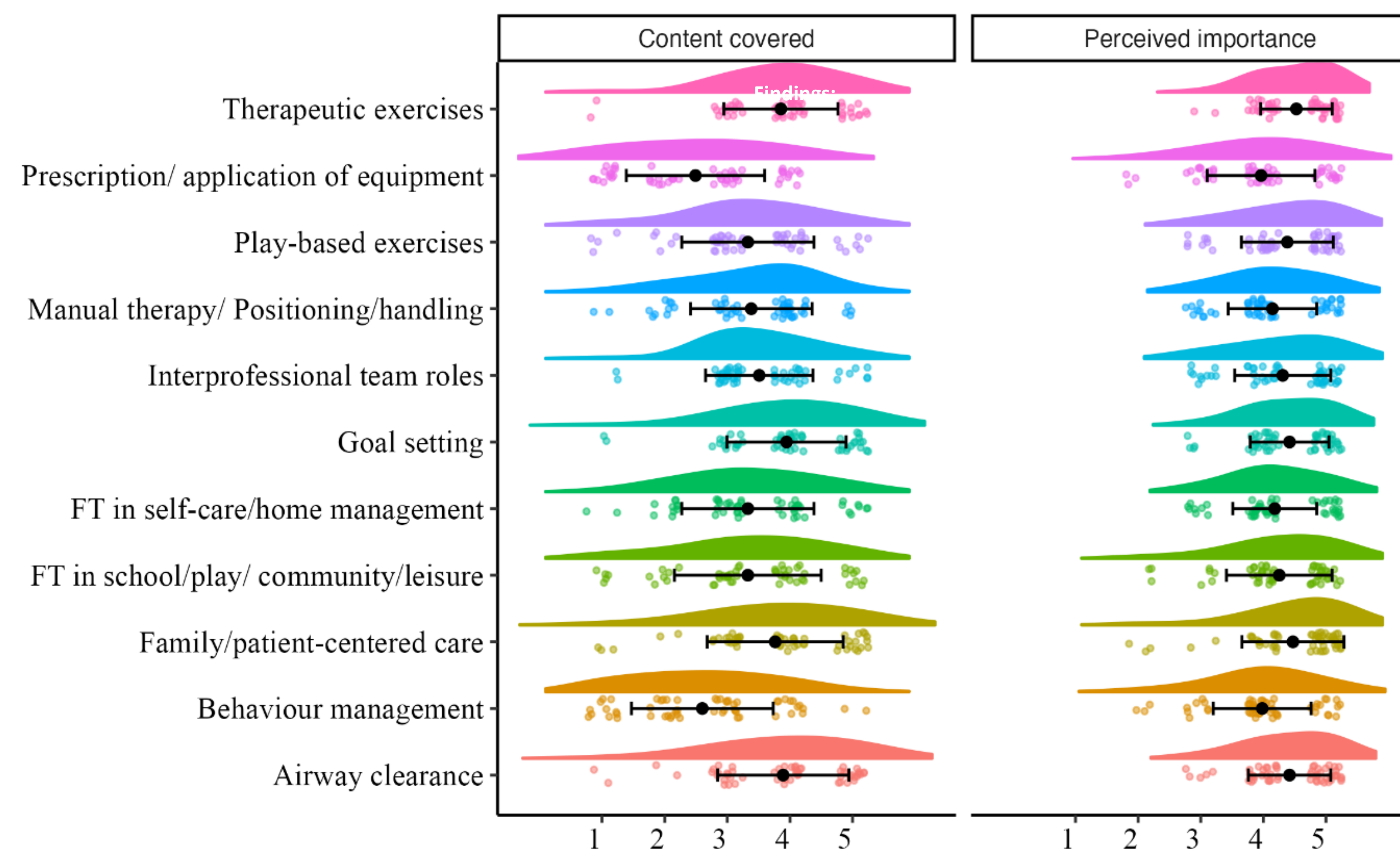
1. Participant Details.
2. Curriculum Perceptions.
3. Curriculum Delivery.
4. Knowledge and importance of a range of Paediatric Content within the curriculum conditions, assessment and intervention.

Data Extraction: Data extracted included Likert scale responses. These were treated as numerical values with mean and standard deviations for responses across each potential answer. The open questions were coded, and a triangulation approach was embedded.

Results: Curricular Content Covered vs Perceived Importance



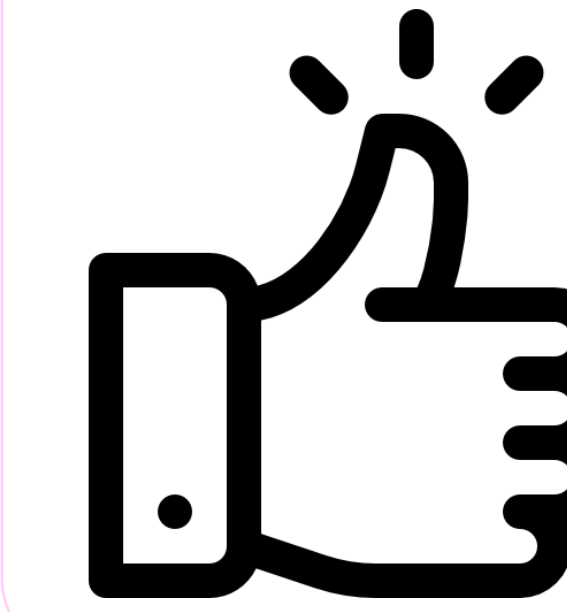
Paediatric assessment techniques.



Paediatric interventions.

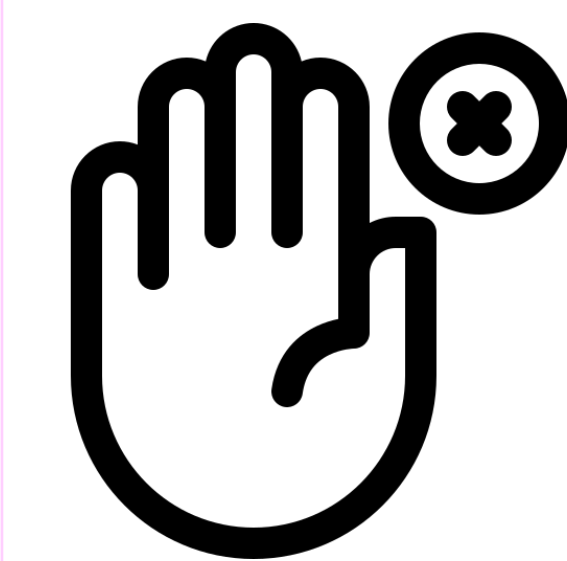
Key: Content covered; 1 = Not at all; 2 = Not very well; 3 = Somewhat; 4 = Well; 5 = Very Well.
Perceived importance; 1 = Not important at all; 2 = Low importance; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Important; 5 = Very important

Themes of Faculty Perceptions: Strengths, limitations and barriers to embedding paediatric content



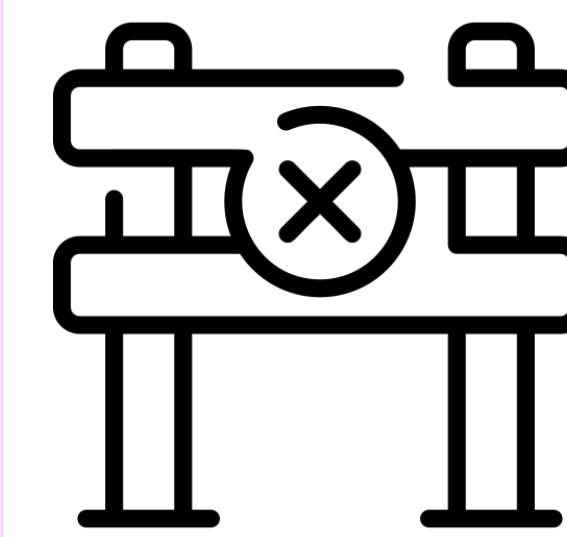
Strengths of Curricula

- Lifespan approach
- Content throughout curriculum
- Broad detailed curriculum with transferrable skills taught
- Links with specialists



Limitations of Curricula

- Time pressures (Ability to prioritise paediatric content)
- Curriculum squeeze
- Placement availability (Not all students will access a paediatric placement)



Institutional Barriers

- "Crowded curriculum" **91%**
- Limited placement availability **67%**
- Limited specialists available to teach in HEI's **51%**
- Lack of coordination among institutions of higher education to develop a collaborative curriculum or standard of education to be taught within the curriculum **40%**

Call to Action

There are inconsistencies across UK paediatric curricula and a set of standards for students in relation to knowledge, skills and attributes required for graduation may be appropriate. Some students may not be exposed to any paediatric teaching or placement experience. They will therefore lack the competencies to assess and treat children and young people in their care.

Ensuring a minimal educational standard is implemented is the first step to developing a competent future workforce.

Findings

Entry level curricula do not cover a range of musculoskeletal, cardiorespiratory and neurological conditions "Well".

Overall paediatric assessment techniques were broadly covered "Well" as were treatment and management interventions.

Perceived importance was in the main greater for most topics, compared to the level of actual coverage within curricula.

References

1. Cech D, Milne N, Connolly B. (2019). Statement on Paediatric Essential and Recommended Content Areas in Entry Level Professional Physical Therapy Education. International Organisation of Physical Therapists in Paediatrics (IOPTP).
2. Lowe CM, Heneghan N, Herbland A, Atkinson K, Beeton K. 2022. Project report for the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Available at: <https://www.csp.org.uk/system/files/documents/2022-06/FINAL%20KNOWBEST%20Project%20Summary%20and%20Report%20June%202022%20%281%29.pdf>. Accessed [20th Jul. 2023]
3. Kenyon LK, Dole RL, & Kelly SP. 2013. Perspectives of academic faculty and clinical instructors on entry-level DPT preparation for pediatric physical therapist practice. Physical Therapy, 93(12), 1661-1672. doi.org/10.2522/ptj.20120538
4. Mistry K, Yonezawa E, & Milne N. 2019. Paediatric Physiotherapy curriculum: an audit and survey of Australian entry-level Physiotherapy programs. BMC medical education, 19(1), 1-18. doi.org/10.1186/s12909-019-1540-z