

## **CONTINUING CHALLENGES FOR PEDIATRIC PHYSICAL THERAPISTS TO PROVIDE EARLY INTERVENTION TO INFANTS WITH RISK OF CEREBRAL PALSY -A CRITICAL NEED TO IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICE**

By writing in the Pakistan Journal of Rehabilitation, I would like to draw attention towards challenges faced by pediatric physical therapists in providing early interventions to infants and children who are at risk of Cerebral Palsy within families and communities. Cerebral Palsy (CP) is the common motor disability in childhood affecting more than 4 children per 1,000 live births across the world<sup>1</sup>. It is characterized by movement disorders that are attributed to disturbance in brain development accompanied by secondary impairments<sup>2</sup>. Among mild to severe CP type the early physiotherapy interventions play key role to decrease poor health conditions such as soft tissue stiffness and joint contractures<sup>2-3</sup> and improves the pace of developmental milestone accomplishment. Interventions as primary care also reinforce efficient practice to stimulate neural connections; as a result it increases functional performance<sup>4</sup>. Numerous studies concluded effectiveness of variety of interventions modalities in physiotherapy such as constraint-induced movement therapy, strength training, gait training, virtual reality, whole-body intervention and hippotherapy on heterogeneous sub-groups of cerebral palsy including spastic diplegia, hemiplegia and tetraplegia however; it is difficult to conclude that if these types would respond differently to various interventions<sup>2-4</sup>. Even for some of the interventions, evidences are not strong to implement as early intervention.

Early intervention is the best practice to reduce risk of Cerebral Palsy but still pediatric physical therapists face continuing challenges, due to poor clinical judgment, lack of training and evidence of standard care that may result in withdrawn of child from rehabilitation<sup>5</sup>. These issues must be considered for the management of children with cerebral palsy since early identification become foundation for ideal intervention. Studies should be conducted to identify challenges faced by pediatric physical therapists to encounter barriers for benchmark practices in clinical settings. Although generating evidence is ongoing but we must also look into the national and local needs in context before implantation.

**Shahla Batool**  
Physiotherapist  
Freelancer

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