

Facilitators and barriers regarding the implementation and interprofessional collaboration of a first contact physiotherapy service in primary care in Wales: a qualitative study

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Background

Future Welsh primary care services are likely to face higher demand for musculoskeletal ailments because of an ageing population and difficulties retaining and recruiting GPs (Goodwin and Henrick, 2016). Physiotherapy first contact practitioners (FCPs) are advanced practitioners working in primary care, providing specialist musculoskeletal assessment, diagnosis, and management as the first point of contact, as opposed to a GP (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 2021). They therefore provide a solution to this issue. However no studies have yet explored FCP services in Wales and consequently, little is known about the experience of working as a Welsh FCP.

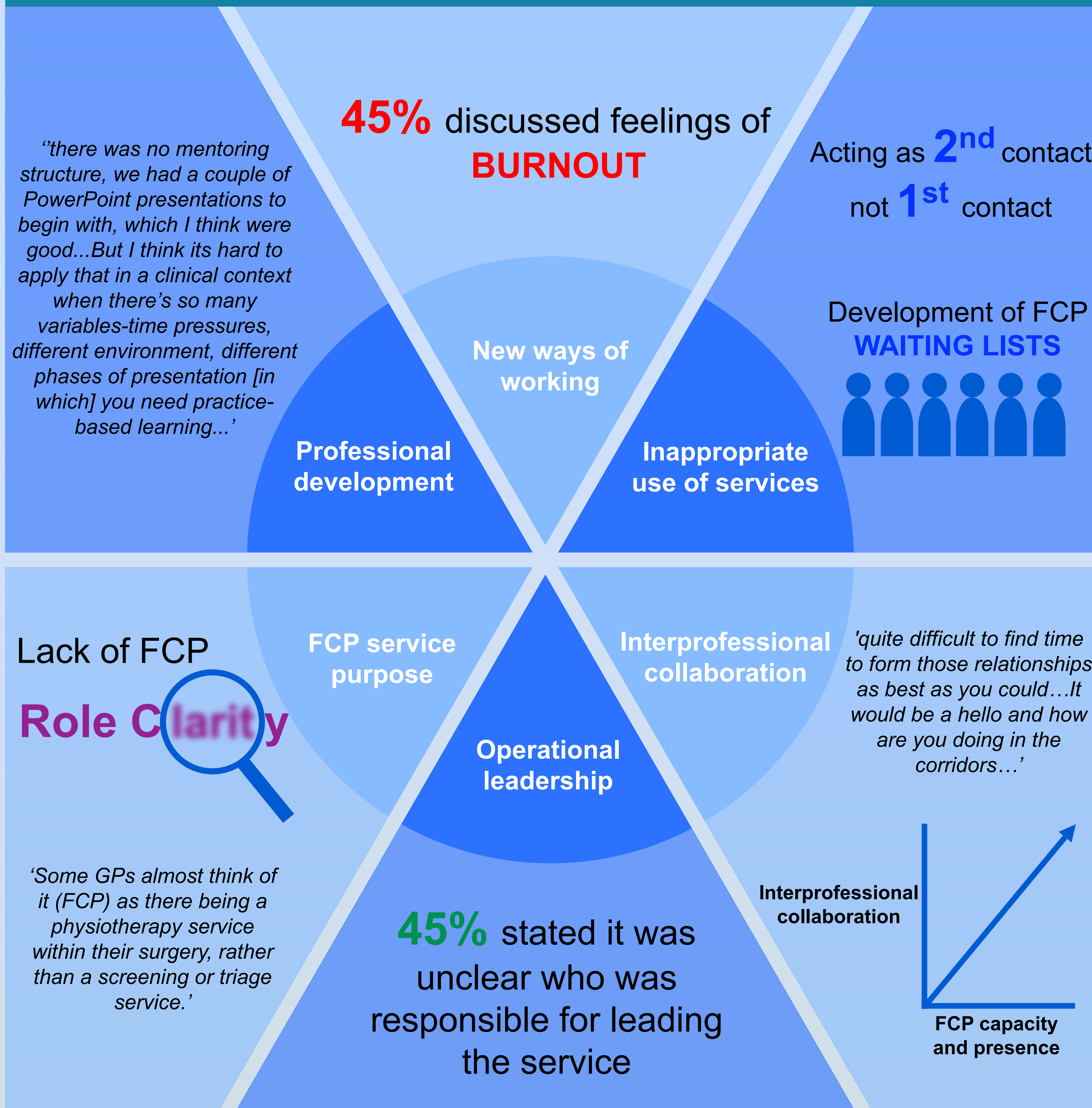
Aims

Explore participants' experiences of:
1. How physiotherapy FCP services had been implemented
2. The nature and extent of interprofessional collaboration
3. The facilitators and barriers associated with providing a FCP service

Methods

A qualitative, Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenological study. A purposive sample of 11 physiotherapists from a NHS health board in South Wales, comprising three different FCP models. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews.

Results



Conclusion

FCP services possessed inadequate professional development, clearly defined service purpose and operational leadership. A lack of role clarity existed, often leading to FCPs acting as the second contact and the development of long waiting lists in some models, resulting in perceived inefficiencies. Increased interprofessional collaboration resulted in increased FCP role clarity but was informed by the type of service model. Burnout was perceived as a risk factor for FCPs possessing limited advanced practice experience, working in a model providing input for multiple surgeries weekly, with a low presence and capacity.

Implications

Clear operational leadership and strategies to increase interprofessional collaboration are required to increase FCP clarity and ensure service efficacy. There is a need for a Welsh professional development, mentorship and governance framework to ensure sustainability and efficacy of FCP services.



References

-Goodwin, R.W. and Hendrick, P.A. 2016. Physiotherapy as a first point of contact in general practice: a solution to a growing problem? *Primary Health Care & Research & Development* 17(5), pp. 489-502. DOI: 10.1017/S1463423616000189
-Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. 2021a. *FCP Services*. Available at: <https://www.csp.org.uk/professional-clinical/improvement-innovation/first-contact-physiotherapy/first-contact-physio-2>