

**DEVELOPMENT OF A PROTOCOL FOR HAND THERAPIST IN THE
TELEREHABILITATION MANAGEMENT OF REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY
(LATERAL EPICONDYLITIS)**

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ABSTRACT

Lateral epicondylitis, a degenerative condition affecting the extensor tendons from the lateral epicondyle, can extend to the joint (Hecht, 2017). Linked to repetitive tasks, forceful exertions, and awkward positions, it can impact various body parts (Newman, 2018). Symptoms may hinder physical activity, sports, and work, persisting for years (Willy, 2019). Therapists use diverse techniques like manual therapy, scar management, and edema control to enhance mobility and hand function (Sloane, 2020). However, therapeutic touch, vital in hand therapy, often requires close, direct contact, posing a challenge for remote interventions. The aim of this study was to develop a protocol for hand therapists in Qatar for the telerehabilitation management of lateral epicondylitis, a form of repetitive strain injury. This study employed a descriptive developmental research design to describe the current practices in Telerehabilitation management, developed protocol level of acceptability of telerehabilitation management of lateral epicondylitis. The findings revealed that the hand therapists strongly agree with current practices in telerehabilitation management for lateral epicondylitis, as indicated by the average weighted mean of 3.68. Hand therapists' developed protocol for Telerehabilitation Management of Lateral Epicondylitis received a rating of "Strongly Agree" based on the average weighted mean of 3.92 and the Level of Acceptability of Telerehabilitation Management of Lateral Epicondylitis was "very high with an average weighted mean of 3.85. It was concluded that the hand therapist provides patient and family education regarding acute lateral epicondylitis, utilizes telerehabilitation technology to conduct assessments and reassessment of patients with acute lateral epicondylitis, and remotely implements and adjusts treatment plans to ensure effective management of the condition. The hand therapists' protocol, encompassing comprehensive assessment, frequent reassessment, strategic management, and ongoing progress monitoring utilizing outcome measures, coupled with the application of wrist splints or athletic tape to restrict range of motion and alleviate pain in affected muscles, has demonstrably enhanced the management of acute lateral epicondylitis and hand therapists are confident that the protocol's utilization of telerehabilitation technologies for delivering remote rehabilitation services to patients with acute lateral epicondylitis yields positive outcomes. This approach not only reduces healthcare and patient expenses but also offers effective and convenient care for numerous remote patients, underscoring its potential for widespread application and benefit.

KEYWORDS: Lateral epicondylitis, Telerehabilitation, Hand Therapists