

REHABILITATION DURING CRISIS: INTEGRATING PHYSICAL THERAPY IN THE DISASTER RESPONSE EFFORTS IN BIÑAN

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ABSTRACT

The Philippines, known as a disaster-prone country, frequently experiences natural disasters. Disasters such as typhoons, floods, and earthquakes severely affect public health and security and strain disaster management. While physical therapists (PTs) play a crucial role in rehabilitation—they continue to be underutilized in disaster management. This study aims to explore the integration of physical therapy into disaster response frameworks within Biñan, Laguna, to address the rehabilitation needs of affected communities. A qualitative-developmental research design was employed using a focus group discussion (FGD) with physical therapists and key stakeholders from the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDRRMO). This study curated a model from existing disaster guidelines and works of literature to develop an integrated disaster response model. Data were analyzed thematically to identify key roles, barriers, and policy gaps affecting the inclusion of PTs in disaster settings. Findings reveal that physical therapists can significantly contribute across all phases of disaster management—emerging as an essential element in disaster response—including their role of early intervention, acute care, and long-term rehabilitation. However, undefined roles, policy gaps, and resource constraints hinder their effective deployment. The study presents a comprehensive framework to which institutionalizes PTs in local disaster response efforts. Integrating physical therapy into Biñan's disaster response enhances community resilience, improves recovery outcomes, and ensures inclusive care for vulnerable populations. This research advocates for policy reforms and capacity-building initiatives to formalize PT roles in disaster preparedness and emergency response in Biñan.

Keywords: Disaster Management, Physical Therapy Integration, Rehabilitation Frameworks, Policy Gaps, Community Resilience