Physical Therapy Management of Pediatric and Adolescent Neck Pain: A Call to Action
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Background
• Prevalence of pediatric and adolescent neck pain estimates as high as 40%¹
• Neck pain ranked 8th in terms of most years lived with disability for adolescents¹
• No current clinical practice guidelines

Inclusion Criteria
• Age under 18 years old
• Musculoskeletal neck pain
• Any intervention or treatment provided by physical therapists
• English language
• Any outcome measure that reported disability, function, or pain
• Any and all published literature: randomized controlled trials (RCTs), systematic reviews, cohort studies, case reports, editorials, and commentaries

Exclusion Criteria
• Developmental disorders
• Headache with neck pain
• Traumatic neck pain

Purpose
• To identify and review literature on physical therapy management of pediatric and adolescent neck pain

Systematic Review
• A sensitive search was conducted using PubMed, CINAHL, and Embase adhering to PRISMA guidelines

5,115 Abstracts
124 Full Text
2 Included Studies

Results
• Same authorship team
• Same intervention: Pain Neuroscience Education (PNE) plus deep neck muscle exercises
• N = 21 participants
• Age: 15 - 18 years old (adolescent)

Randomized Controlled Trial
• 48% reported a definite improvement²
• Pain score (VAS) was non-significant²

Qualitative Study
• Participants perceived relevance of acquired knowledge and perceived adequacy of intervention with respect to PNE³

Conclusions
• PNE plus deep neck flexor and extensor strengthening may have some benefit
• Findings are often extrapolated for pediatric and adolescent neck pain management
• Different management strategies may be necessary due to biopsychosocial differences between children and adults
• Limited evidence = CALL TO ACTION for clinicians to perform further research in this population

Clinical Relevance
• Minimal clinical evidence to support PNE
• Shortage of published literature limits the ability for clinicians to confidently provide appropriate evidence-based care for this population
• These findings suggest a significant amount of literature is needed for this population including RCTs, cohort studies, case series, and case reports

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