

An exploration of physiotherapy students' experiences of using mirror therapy for neurological patients in a placement setting.

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**Background:** The recent Stroke Clinical Guidelines (2023) promote mirror therapy (MT) as an adjunct intervention to be used alongside conventional physiotherapy for recovery of arm function. There is also evidence supporting the use of mirrors as visual feedback for balance and gait (Louie et al, 2019). The majority of the literature focuses on the therapeutic benefits of MT. Minimal qualitative research on experiences of using MT exist. There was no previous research available on students' experiences using MT. This study explored Physiotherapy students' experiences of using MT for neurological patients within their placement settings.

**Methods:** A qualitative, phenomenological approach was adopted to answer the research question via a focus group exploring the experiences of physiotherapy students. Thematic analysis was utilised to generate themes from the collected data.

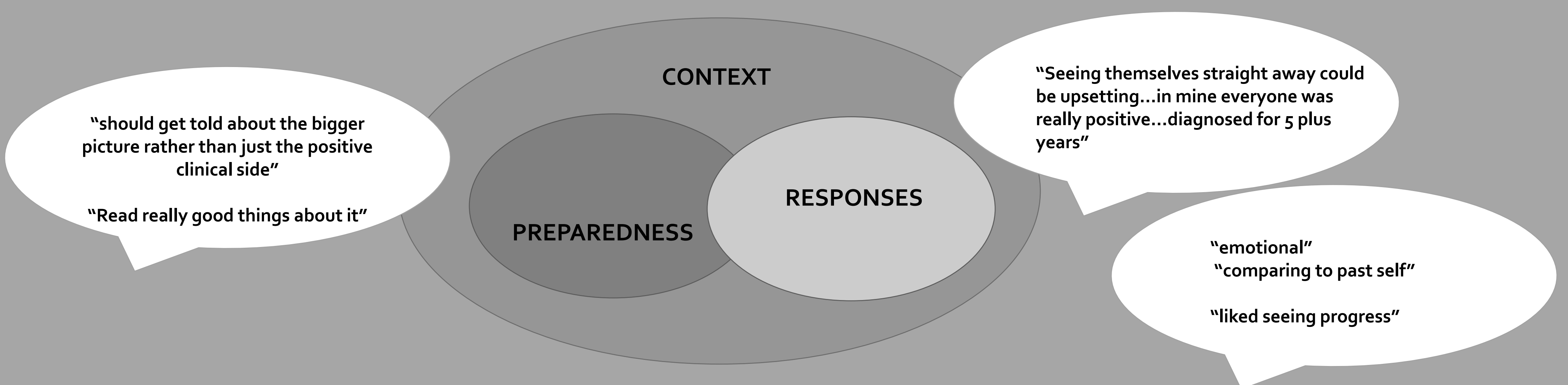
Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Current 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> year Physiotherapy students at University of Coventry	Not used mirror therapy on neurological setting placement
Placement experience within a neurological setting	1st year students or qualified Physiotherapists and Assistants.
Used mirror therapy as a treatment intervention	

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria



Diagram 1: A standard mirror therapy box (amazon.co.uk)

**Findings:** Three key themes were generated from the data: context of the mirror, responses from the mirror, and preparedness for the mirror. Although separate, the themes interconnect, and the context of the mirror overarches the other two themes.



**Conclusion:** Students reported a lack of awareness of MT prior to their placements. Those that were aware of MT, knew only of the therapeutic benefits. There was agreement that MT was a useful tool when used correctly, but students reported both experience of positive and negative patient responses to the mirror. Overall, MT appeared only suitable to offer to certain patients, with many factors impacting on this. Patient and qualified Therapist experiences of MT warrant further investigation to support further knowledge on this topic and it's clinical use across the Stroke pathway.

**Key References:**

National Clinical Guideline for Stroke for the UK and Ireland (2023) Section 4.18  
 Freysteinson, W. (2020) 'Demystifying the mirror taboo: A neurocognitive model of viewing self in the mirror'. Nursing Inquiry 27(4), 1-9. DOI:10.1111/nin.12351  
 Louie, D., Lim, S., and Eng, J. (2019) 'The Efficacy of Lower Extremity Mirror Therapy for Improving Balance, Gait, and Motor Function Poststroke: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis'. Journal of Stroke and Cerebrovascular Diseases 28(1), 107-120. DOI:10.1016/j.jstrokecerebrovasdis.2018.09.017