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Client experiences with stroke rehabilitation - a meta-summary of qualitative findings

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Introduction:

Stroke is a significant health issue with great impact on the lives of the stroke survivors.

Occupational therapy, at its best, is client-centred. A way to ensure this, is to recognize the client's experience and knowledge by integrating the perspective of the client in the rehabilitation process.

Qualitative research is increasingly gaining more exposure and credibility as a way to investigate the perspective of the client. However, even though qualitative research has shown a substantive body of knowledge, it still has little impact on clinical practice. The fast growing amount of qualitative research calls for systematic ways to make this knowledge more accessible to give direction to practitioners for best occupational therapy interventions.

Objectives:

The objective of this study is to undertake a qualitative meta-summary concerning the client's experiences with stroke rehabilitation. This can:

- Provide an overview of current knowledge about the client's experiences on stroke rehabilitation.
- Make qualitative findings more assessable for practitioners and policy-makers.
- Be an important contribution to evidence-based occupational therapy.

Design, method & material:

Published articles were identified from PubMed, CINAHL, EMBASE and PsycINFO, and through a hand search in key journals published between 1990 to 2008. The articles were assessed on their relevance to the topic, and appraised for rigour and quality.

Results:

Twelve studies were included in the meta-synthesis, with a collective sample of 269 participants.

Relationship between the different findings were examined and combined on their shared characteristics. This process identified one main theme; "Power and Empowerment", and 8 subcategories; 1) Coping with a new situation, 2) Informational needs, 3) Physical and non-physical needs, 4) Organization of health care, 5) Being personally valued and treated with respect, 6) Assuming responsibility and seizing control, 7) Collaboration with health care professionals, and 8) Human connectedness.

Conclusion: (Preliminary)

Power and empowerment emerged as a main theme, showing to be a core factor influencing all aspects of the stroke survivor's experiences with rehabilitation. The stroke survivors located and traced their lack of power and experiences with injustice, as both relational and organizational.

Contribution to practice: (Preliminary)

The findings provides rich knowledge on the clients experience with stroke rehabilitation. This can give direction for best occupational therapy practice.