

Encountering staff in the home: Older adults' experience during home-based rehabilitation

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The purpose of the present study was to explore and describe how older adults during the period they received home-based rehabilitation perceived the staff. Collaboration with the client and client-centredness are stated as fundamental in occupational therapy. A number of studies have focused on whether occupational therapists services are client-centered and how the clients evaluate services. However, little is known about how the clients themselves want to collaborate with the professionals and how clients make use of the services from the staff including OTs.

Objectives: To explore and describe how older adults who received home-based rehabilitation regard the staff during the period they receive rehabilitation services.

Methods. Data was collected as a case-oriented study which meant being on site to explore each unique case in depth as their daily life unfolded. Three older adults were interviewed continuously during the six-month period they received home-based rehabilitation. The interviews were analysed using a grounded theory approach.

Results. Five different modes of perceiving the staff were identified among the participants: as small talk persons, as discussions partners, as instructors and advisors, as teachers, and as persons who carry out tasks efficiently. The three conditions that most came to influence the way the participants perceived and collaborated with the staff were: 'experience and encounters with the staff', 'expectations for the future daily life', and finally 'the participants' needs and tasks related to their disability'. These had the strongest influence on how the staff's services were regarded.

Conclusions. To claim to be client-centered, OTs have to respond to the clients' own modes of making use of the OTs services. Furthermore, in order to achieve collaboration and user-involvement, OTs have to encounter each client differently in accordance with the various tasks that must be carried out during rehabilitation. Our findings indicate that this is particularly important for older adults who often experience comorbidity and continuously changing needs during the period they receive home-based rehabilitation.

Contribution to the practice: This study has added further knowledge to the OT ideal of client-centerness and how OTs may have to vary their ways of meeting clients in their homes.