

Perceived and observed difficulties using everyday technology after acquired brain injury

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Using everyday technology (ET) is a prerequisite for activities and participation at home and in the community. ET includes a variety of electronic, technical and mechanical equipment, e.g. washing machines, microwave ovens, mobile phones, and remote controls. It is well-known that persons with an acquired brain injury (ABI) can have limitations in activities of daily living but our knowledge of their difficulties using ET is not known. The aim of the first of two studies was to describe perceived difficulties using ET in persons with an ABI and how these difficulties influenced their everyday activities and their possibilities to participate at home and in the community. Thirty-six persons, 26-60 years, were assessed and data were collected by interviews using the Everyday Technology Use Questionnaire. The aim of the second study was to identify and describe the characteristics of the difficulties using ET in persons with ABI, and their experiences of how these difficulties influenced their lives. A purposive sampling of 13 persons who reported difficulties using ET (in the first study) were interviewed and observed to identify and describe their difficulties. Twenty-eight participants in the first study reported difficulties using ET. The most common difficulties were related to the use of telecommunications and computers. Despite these difficulties, most persons still used most objects independently. A majority of the participants perceived that their difficulties using ET influenced their activities and their possibility to participate at home and in the community. The results of the second study showed a combination of difficulties, which were combined in different ways as starting and finishing the use of ET. The difficulties varied between the participants according to situations in the participants' lives and restricted participation in community. The difficulties identified were related to the dynamic interaction between the technology, the task, the person and the environment. This showed that occupational therapists should promote the design of client-centred interventions to contain all aspects that support the performance of occupations in which ET is used.