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Burn survivors in Singapore and their perceptions of participation in occupations

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Introduction

The Burns Centre of Singapore General Hospital sees an average of 288 burn-injured patients yearly. Of these, many will return to their daily activities with physical limitations and scars. Current occupational therapy intervention uses modalities such as splinting, mobilisation and pressure garments to improve functional abilities and manage scars. However, it is unknown if burn survivors actually feel that participation in occupations after their injury is optimally addressed.

Objectives

This qualitative study aims to explore the perceptions of burn survivors in Singapore regarding their participation in occupations following their injury. In particular, it seeks to establish what they perceive as useful to enable successful return to meaningful participation in occupations again.

Methods

Using an ethnographic approach, a total of twelve individual interviews are targeted to be carried out until data saturation is reached. Participants will be aged between 21-50 years old, speak English or Mandarin, and have a burn injury within the last 5 years of more than 20% total burn surface area.

Currently, two interviews have been completed. The interviews were carried out using a semi-structured interview guide, recorded digitally and transcribed verbatim. Double coding was carried out. Field notes from the interviews were also considered.

Results

Main emerging themes from the data so far centred on the importance of personal volition, family and social support, activities in rehabilitation and the role of healthcare providers.

Contribution to the practice of occupational therapy

The study findings are expected to give key information to contribute to occupational therapy practice in this field. Emergent themes will be conceptualised and implemented in an occupational therapy practice framework to address factors perceived to help facilitate burn survivors' engagement in occupations after their injury. At this point, the themes suggest that intervention could focus on enabling burn survivors to recognise the value of personal volition, family and social support and activities in rehabilitation. It is also pertinent to further explore the role of healthcare providers and consequent impact on the burn survivor's rehabilitation journey.

Conclusion

More emerging themes are expected in future interviews and will be further explored in-depth until data saturation.