

Understandings and images of Mobility Service Dogs

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Introduction

Mobility service dogs are the dogs trained to picking up things, opening doors, pulling wheelchairs, and so on for people with mobility disabilities. The Access Law for People with Service Dogs has been enforced in Japan since 2002. However, many mobility service dog users have experienced being refused to use places such as a restaurant, because they are with mobility service dogs. We thought that lack of information to the public about mobility service dogs could be one of the reasons why participation restrictions of the mobility service dog user are induced. The purposes of this research were to know understandings and images of the mobility service dog and to find factors of participation restrictions of the mobility service dog user.

Subjects and methods

942 ordinary men and women completed a structured questionnaire anonymously, after giving their informed consent.

Results

The percentage of subjects who had good images about the mobility service dog was 93.7%. 92.7% of subjects believed that the mobility service dog user could use a restaurant together with the mobility service dog. 95.4% of subjects answered that their school and workplace didn't have a guidebook about service dogs and that they had never taken a lecture about service dogs. 90.1% of subjects didn't know about the Access Law for People with Service Dogs.

Conclusion

Ordinary people have positive images about people using mobility service dogs. However, they didn't know the law or how to cooperate with mobility service dog users.

Contribution to the practice

The Law provides that service dog suppliers must call for the collaboration of health care providers like occupational therapists, as necessary, to train service dogs for people with physical disabilities. Occupational therapists usually evaluate a candidate for a mobility service dog and consider how the candidate can use and take care of the mobility service dog. Besides this, occupational therapists can contribute to reducing participation restrictions in the environment by explaining to ordinary citizens how to cooperate with mobility service dog users. We can be involved in making guidebooks and giving lectures about mobility service dogs.