

Healthcare Survival Skills: Feasibility, Acceptability and Preliminary Outcomes of an Occupational Therapist-Disability Peer Led Intervention to Promote Healthcare Access, Quality and Outcomes for People with Disabilities

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Background: According to The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, healthcare is a human right. People with physical disabilities face significant barriers to healthcare access, quality and outcomes. Occupational therapy interventions do not typically address the occupation of navigating the healthcare system.

Objectives: To report the feasibility and preliminary outcomes of "Healthcare Survival Skills", a 5-module occupational therapist-disability peer led educational intervention designed to teach people with physical disabilities how to navigate the healthcare system.

Methods: We used a community-based participatory research approach to develop the active elements of the intervention. We then conducted an experimental feasibility study in a group of 30 adults with acquired physical disabilities (15 intervention and 15 control). Acceptability to both participants and interventionists were evaluated qualitatively. It was hypothesized that people in the intervention group would demonstrate greater patient activation at 6 weeks and 3 months and fewer barriers to care and improved global health at 3 months.

Results: The intervention was acceptable to interventionists and participants. Participants in the intervention arm showed increased knowledge on how to 1) identify barriers to healthcare, 2) advocate for their accommodation needs, and 3) communicate with healthcare providers. Preliminary outcomes indicate increased patient activation in the intervention group. There were no significant differences between the intervention and control groups on more distal outcomes of barriers to care and global health.

Conclusions: The OT-disability peer led "Healthcare Survival Skills" intervention has the potential to positively impact healthcare experiences of people with physical disabilities.