

Establishing the perceptions of quality of life of individuals with neurological conditions using Q - methodology.

Alexandra Palombi^{1,2}, Susan Corr², Emanuela Bartolomucci¹

¹*ICOT, GIOMI, Latina, Italy,* ²*The University of Northampton, Northampton, United Kingdom*

Quality of life is an increasingly measured component within a variety of healthcare disciplines and research. It is a poorly defined concept. Its subjective nature makes it difficult to understand, assess and measure. Neurological disorders often result in disability. The increase in dependency of an individual may be assumed to have an impact on the functional, emotional and social well being of that individual and therefore have adverse effects on the quality of life of the individual. This increases the requirement for professionals to understand their clients in order to select appropriate interventions. The aim of this study is to establish the perceptions of quality of life of individuals with neurological conditions.

Q Methodology, an approach that draws on qualitative and quantitative paradigms and was developed to provide a basis for a science of subjectivity, was used. The views of 25 participants, all living with neurological conditions and were aged over 50 years, were obtained. Each sorted a Q pack of 37 statements relating to quality of life indicating which statements most reflected or least reflected their individual concept of quality of life. Statistical analysis by correlation, factor analysis and computation of factor scores was undertaken. The final results are expressed qualitatively. Three significant factors (viewpoints) emerged: 1) "independence, choice and control", including being in good physical health and able to carry out all daily activities independently 2) "maintaining dignity, values and aspirations" including spiritual well-being and the ability to cope with changes in one's life and 3) "actively contributing to society" including being able to work, earn money and feel productive.

This study supports existing literature, that is, there are many different definitions for quality of life. The emerging factors reinforce the subjective nature of quality of life in particular from the perspective of individuals with neurological conditions. Understanding the perceptions of quality of life in a population that an occupational therapist is treating could provide valuable input to the clinical reasoning process. This study can assist occupational therapists to provide a service which is tailored to the needs of the individuals.