

A Framework for Best Practice Community-Based Rehabilitation Programs

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Introduction

Community-based Rehabilitation(CBR) is a community development strategy focusing on equalization of opportunities and inclusion of people with disabilities. There is no universal model of CBR applicable everywhere and each CBR program typically evolves its own strategies and methods appropriate to its context and culture. However, agreement on core elements of CBR programs does appear to be emerging within the literature. In this study, a "Best Practice Framework" was developed and validated in the Chinese context for the purpose of guiding evaluation and practice.

Objectives

To establish and test a framework to effectively describe and evaluate CBR programs within Chinese communities.

Methods

A case study approach was adopted. An Initial Framework was built from an extensive review on literature which included the conceptual papers and published program reports. This framework was then pilot tested using five CBR programs in China. Necessary revisions were made. The final framework was then validated by examining twelve Chinese community rehabilitation programs (self-reported CBR and rehabilitation programs in the community) to test its utility in describing their program nature and identifying best practice programs.

Results

A Best Practice Framework was formulated with five domains: Participant Outcomes; CBR Program Content; Participant Empowerment; Community Ownership; and Program Operation and Management. Twenty five core elements of CBR programs were categorized under these five domains and a set of indicators were developed to guide identification of such elements in programs. The results of the validation showed that the Framework was able to distinguish four types of CBR programs namely (1) rehabilitation program with a narrow focus, (2) rehabilitation program with a broad focus, (3) premature CBR program, and (4) mature CBR program.

Conclusion

The validated framework is able to both describe and evaluate CBR programs in Chinese communities. It is useful in the differentiation of programs and describing best practice.

Contribution

This Framework will provide CBR funders, managers, therapists and workers with a tool to assist in the development and monitoring of CBR programs. Although validated in Chinese communities, it was built on the international literature and may therefore be useful in CBR programs in other countries.

