

Occupational gaps in everyday life after stroke

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Introduction

Persons affected by stroke often experience difficulties in performing important activities. Often there is a gap between what the person wants to do, and actually does. This is defined as an occupational gap. Studies have shown that life satisfaction is related to which extent younger persons with acquired brain injury does what they want to do, and that life satisfaction is negatively affected by stroke. By using a client-centred approach occupational therapists can help persons with stroke adapting to their new situation. The consequences of occupational gaps for persons with stroke of all ages are not yet explored.

Objectives

The aim was to describe a group of people affected by stroke; to examine the prevalence of occupational gaps and their relation to the people's perception of recovery, life satisfaction, participation in activities one year after stroke and performance of ADL at inclusion and one year after stroke. In addition gender differences are described.

Method

Data from a longitudinal study on the rehabilitation process after stroke conducted at Karolinska University Hospital in Stockholm (n=374) were used. A total of 161 persons, who answered the questions required in this study, were included. The instruments used are the Occupational Gaps Questionnaire, the Stroke Impact Scale, the Katz extended ADL-index, the Barthel ADL Index and the Life Satisfaction Scale 11.

Results

The prevalence of occupational gaps was high. For the activities "travelling for pleasure", "sports", "outdoor life" and "cleaning" most gaps were reported.

No statistically significant relations linking occupational gaps and age, cohabiting with partner or mental state at inclusion were found. There was however a tendency of correlation between the amount of occupational gaps and life satisfaction, recovery after stroke, performance in ADL at inclusion and after one year. There were no gender differences in any aspect.

Conclusion

Despite that there are no statistically significant relationships among the prevalence of occupational gaps and variables described, the result suggests that interventions should be based on activities clients find meaningful.

Contribution to practice

The occupational Gaps Questionnaire appears to be valuable in planning individual client-centred rehabilitation for persons with stroke.