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"Taking My Territory Back": Narrative Exposure Of The Value Of Non-Compliance In Healing And Recovery Following Stroke.

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A longitudinal case history of an individual stroke survivor informs this presentation on potential ways in which a non-compliant stance might be useful to the process of healing and recovery from a catastrophic illness. Since introduced by Sackett and Hayes in the 1970s, the concept of compliance in health care has been the subject of a great deal of research and critique. Recently, the discourse on compliance and adherence has shifted toward a more complete re-conceptualization, one that acknowledges the complex interactions through which health care professionals and clients must collaborate, and that behaviors linked to maintaining one's health are intricately tied to a contextual process involving the negotiation of a variety of influences. This work suggests exciting possibilities for occupational therapy and occupational science contributions to understanding and promoting health behaviors among individuals and communities. This presentation also offers an alternate perspective on non-compliance: the contrasting view that there may be times when non-compliance is actually beneficial.

This paper presents findings from a longitudinal case study with Sara, a woman recovering from a stroke. This longitudinal case history used narrative to provide a way for the researcher and clinicians to better understand the lived experiences of an individual participating in rehabilitation, and the complexity surrounding functional and occupational transitions in stroke recovery. The researcher interviewed the stroke survivor, along with friends and family members, caregivers, and the entire rehabilitation team. The stroke survivor was followed, via regular interviews and participant observation in the natural context -hospital, home and community - for the first year of recovery. Sara's experiences highlight possible ways in which a tendency to "go against", what some might consider non-compliance or even recalcitrance, can be an asset in the complex and formidable process of reconstructing life and self with a new body and a new mind. In support of this idea, the paper offers stories of significant turning points in Sara's occupations or recovery that seemed tied to a recalcitrant stance, and discusses the apparent advantages of Sara's unwillingness to comply with medical authority.