

Therapy intensity in the therapeutic rehabilitation climate in skilled nursing facilities, and the role of nurses.

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Introduction:

Stroke is an invalidating disease, of which functional recovery can be reached over time and can be improved by rehabilitation. In The Netherlands, older and frail stroke patients are rehabilitated in skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) by multidisciplinary teams. These SNFs are characterized by a therapeutic rehabilitation climate, and there is a specific role for nurses in the therapeutic climate. In this therapeutic climate, task oriented interventions seem to have an impact on the rehabilitation outcomes of patients with stroke, and these interventions are usable in clinical practice especially by nurses. Furthermore, the intensity of therapy and the motivation of patients are important factors for successful discharge from the SNF back to the home situation. Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine therapy intensity and patients' motivation, and their influence on discharge from the SNF.

Methods:

Data was obtained from the Geriatric Rehabilitation in AMPutation and Stroke study (GRAMPS), which is a longitudinal observational study of stroke rehabilitation of 186 patients in 15 Dutch nursing homes. Therapeutic activity (nurse and therapists) was registered during admission, using a behavioral mapping method. Patient's motivation was measured by the Pittsburgh Rehabilitation Participation Scale (PRPS). Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics, calculating associations with the Kruskal-Wallis test and uni- and multivariate regression analyses.

Results:

Data were collected daily from 8 AM to 5 PM. Patients spent more than half (56%) of that part of the day on therapeutic activities. Most therapeutic time was spent on nursing care (9%) and physical therapy (4%). Patients stayed an average 41% of the day in their own room and were alone 49% of the day. Patients received an average 109 min of physiotherapy per week. Of those patients, 82% had a good motivation for physical therapy (PRPS scores 4 or higher). Functional status and discharge to the prior living situation were positively influenced by higher therapy intensity. Having a partner and high PRPS scores ($4 >$) were associated with higher therapy intensity.

Conclusion:

Intensity of stroke rehabilitation in SNFs is important to achieve better functional status and a successful discharge to the prior living situation. Therapeutic activities are increasing when the patient has a partner or is better motivated for therapy. Nevertheless patients are alone half of the day, not doing any purposeful activities. Nurses are facing the challenge of activating patients with stroke and to assist them in relevant task-oriented exercises, including purposeful daily activities. A therapeutic rehabilitation climate in SNFs, supported by all multidisciplinary team members will contribute to better rehabilitation outcomes.