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Patients' experiences of group therapy during inpatient stroke rehabilitation

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ABSTRACT

Background- New and cost effective therapies, such as group therapy, in stroke rehabilitation in the early stages of stroke onset have emerged. Group therapy plays a significant role in improving the physical and psychosocial domains of functioning, particularly in the recovery of mobility, performance of activities of daily living, quality of life and prevention of post stroke depression. There is little knowledge available regarding patients' experiences and views on group therapy during inpatient stroke rehabilitation. Therefore this study's aim was to evaluate patients' experiences of group therapy, post stroke, during inpatient rehabilitation.

Method- A qualitative study was performed, involving twelve participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person or telephonically with patients that had received group therapy during inpatient rehabilitation. Three private rehabilitation units in Johannesburg were included in the study. The interviews were used to gain insight into patients' experiences of group therapy such as types of groups that they liked or disliked participating in, positives and negative aspects of group therapy and their preference between individual and group therapy. MAXQDA software was used to organise, code and analyse the data.

Results- There were three themes that emerged from the interviews: Social experiences of group therapy, viewpoints on the different types of group therapy and the type of preferred therapy. The majority of participants enjoyed participating in the group therapy and found it beneficial for their recovery after stroke. They found the groups to have significant benefits for their physical and psychosocial functioning. In particular, they enjoyed participating in a variety of groups, which were not limited to circuit group training. Most of the participants found it beneficial for their overall recovery after stroke to participate in both individual and group therapy.

Conclusion- Individuals that received inpatient stroke rehabilitation preferred participating in a combination of both individual and group therapy. They had positive experiences of receiving this combination of therapy, and felt that it was beneficial for their physical and psychosocial recovery after a stroke.