

Return-to-work Program For Stroke Survivors: A Pilot Study

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Background

For some stroke survivors, vocational rehabilitation is of utmost importance in their recovery. The general rate of employment among all people with disabilities is estimated at 17% and the rate of successful return to work post stroke is estimated from 19% - 73% among stroke survivors. In Hong Kong, work assessment and rehabilitation are highly structured and well developed in Occupational Therapy (OT) practice. However, there is limited experience and evidence of return-to-work program specific for stroke survivors. Therefore, there is a need to establish the specific return-to-work program for stroke patients and examine its efficacy in local settings.

Objectives

The two objectives of this study are:

- 1) to develop a return-to-work program specific for stroke survivors and
- 2) to investigate the effectiveness of the new program on success return-to-work.

Methodology

A return-to-work program for stroke patients were developed according to the existing evidence from literature. The program consisted of initial work assessment, work capacity evaluation, work rehabilitation specific for stroke, including function and upper limb training, cognitive training, strategy education and training, work simulation and hardening.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, a pre-post study design was adopted. Participants with a diagnosis of stroke and a premorbid full-time job were recruited from August 2019 to July 2020. Work assessments were conducted by the evaluator. A course of work rehabilitation was provided to the patients with training needs. The primary outcome measure is the successful return to work of the participant.

Results and Discussion

Six participants with a diagnosis of stroke were recruited for this study. The mean age of the participants was 51.2 years old. 66.7% of the participants were female and 33.3% were male. All of the participants had received initial work assessments. Three of the participants (50%) only received the assessments.

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PATIENT OUTCOMES OF THE PILOT PROGRAM

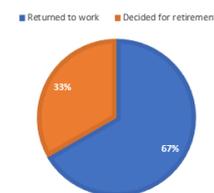


Figure 1

JOB STATUS OF THE PARTICIPANTS RETURNED TO WORK

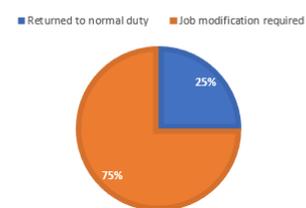


Figure 2

Conclusion

This study suggested the pilot stroke return-to-work program showed preliminary positive effects in facilitating stroke patients to return to work. However, in view of the small sample size and the lack of a control group, further investigations on the intervention are indicated in future research.

Reference

- [1] Treger, I., Shames, J., Giaquinto, S., & Ring, H. (2007). Return to work in stroke patients. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 29(17), 1397-1403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638280701314923>