

Fatigue Management Online: Pilot of a six-week group for stroke survivors

Anna Hughes (Assistant Psychologist), Dr Joanne Hawker (Principal Clinical Psychologist)

Background

- Fatigue is a common and debilitating issue that effects 50% of people post stroke (1) the importance of addressing fatigue is highlighted in the stroke NICE and RCP guidelines.
- Reports from stroke survivors indicate that fatigue is not discussed during recovery and few professionals provide input to its impact (2,3)
- Evidence indicates that the consequences of this appear to remain in the long-term, recent longitudinal research found that half of participants 2 years + post-stroke exhibited psychological difficulties including domains of fatigue (4).
- Evidence suggests that group-based training in fatigue management may be an efficient means of reducing its effects (5). Despite this, up to date evidence-based interventions for fatigue are lacking (6).

Why did we develop the fatigue online group?

- To establish whether providing supportive prevention and management techniques within a community ESD and rehabilitation team would lead to a decline in fatigue symptoms.
- To test the feasibility of the team offering an online group intervention
- To test acceptability of an online group option for stroke survivors

Aims

- To test the practicability of an online group for stroke survivors within an Early Supported Discharge and Community Rehabilitation Service
- To evaluate patient satisfaction and any changes in fatigue post group

Method

- Two six-week groups were completed. Six stroke survivors attended in total.
- Sessions were one hour in duration, facilitated over MS teams by members of the MDT with skills and knowledge in post stroke fatigue.
- Participants were provided with workbooks to supplement the sessions.
- Content and structure were informed by a literature review and other fatigue group programmes (Sheffield Talking Therapies, Brain Injury service Sheffield, Stroke fatigue group Leeds).
- Pre and post measures were completed - Fatigue Assessment Scale (FAS) and a patient satisfaction questionnaire (developed to match group aims).

Results

Pre and post group measures (FAS)

Group member	Pre	Post
1)	42	24
2)	36	22
3)	40	41
4)	34	36

Group member	Pre	Post
1)	18	30
2)	38	35

Feedback

Patient satisfaction questionnaire

I realise now that making choices for me is ok

I felt normal and comfortable with others in the same boat

I benefitted from other people's stories and experience

I feel equipped with ways to manage fatigue

Evaluation

- Whilst this group has only been piloted with a small number of stroke survivors, the initial pilot indicates feasibility and acceptability of the group format and delivery to both facilitators and attendees.
- We have received positive feedback as well as suggestions for adaptations by group members which we have revised
- Whilst support was put in place to help people attend the group online, the barriers to attendance of an online group are recognised (including technological, cognitive, communication, fatigue, language, preference)
- To measure change in fatigue symptoms we adopted use of the FAS in line with the NICE guidelines (stroke). This included statements directly related to fatigue. The NICE guidelines (stroke) also recommend use of the Fatigue Severity Scale or the Modified Fatigue Impact Scale which we did not use. The self-report nature of the FAS may have led to some bias
- The intervention does not include long term follow up regarding fatigue changes. Literature shows that the effects of fatigue are long standing and need to be addressed and assessed.

Conclusions

- The fatigue management group was received positively by all who attended. Five participants reported to be “very satisfied” and one “mostly satisfied” with the group content (patient satisfaction questionnaire).
- Feedback from group members highlight the importance of in-depth education surrounding fatigue and how to manage symptoms, particularly in a setting with others experiencing similar difficulties.
- To investigate outcomes of the group further wider evaluation, such as interviews with facilitators/ team members, as well as other data considering service effects of the group would help facilitate understanding. This is not a research study and due to the small sample of participants we are unable to identify if the group would influence any significant effects. Research studies on fatigue interventions post stroke may help to evaluate the efficacy of fatigue interventions on outcomes.
- Facilitation of further fatigue management sessions will be beneficial to establish any significant changes to fatigue symptoms in a larger population.
- Evaluation of fatigue in the long term should be considered.

References

- (1) Vitturi, B.K.; Mire, L.P.; Kim, A.I.H.; Gagliardi, R.J. Prevalence and Predictors of Fatigue and Neuropsychiatric Symptoms in Patients with Minor Ischemic Stroke. *J. Stroke Cerebrovasc. Dis.* 2021, 30, 105964.
- (2) Devereux, N., & Bems, A. M. (2023). Evaluation & treatment of psychological effects of stroke. *Delaware Journal of Public Health*, 9(3), 62-69. doi:https://doi.org/10.32481/djph.2023.08.011
- (3) Wafa, S. A., Basuodan, R. M., Shalabi, K. M., Ahmed, S. A., Alotabi, M., Kontou, E., ... Coulson, N. (2023). Perceptions of post-stroke fatigue among health care practitioners: A qualitative interview study. *Medicina*, 59(12), 2146. doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/medicina5912146
- (4) Kusec, A., Milosevic, E., Williams, O. A., Chiu, E. G., Watson, P., Carrick, C., ... Demeyere, N. (2023). Long-term psychological outcomes following stroke: The OX-CHRONIC study. *BMC Neurology*, 23, 1-17. doi:https://doi.org/10.1186/s12883-023-03463-5
- (5) Emery, C. E. (2015). *Relieving post-stroke fatigue using a group-based educational training approach* (Order No. 3704327). Available from Health Research Premium Collection, (1690497998). Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/relying-post-stroke-fatigue-using-group-based-educational-approach/docview/1690497998/pe-2>
- (6) Brown, S. E., Shah, A., Cuzner-Dochan, W., Bench, S., & Stayt, L. (2023). Non-pharmacological interventions for self-management of fatigue in adults: An umbrella review of potential interventions to support patients recovering from critical illness. *Journal of Critical Care*, 75 doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jc.2023.154779