

# A Qualitative Study of Stroke Survivors' Experiences of Living with Facial Palsy

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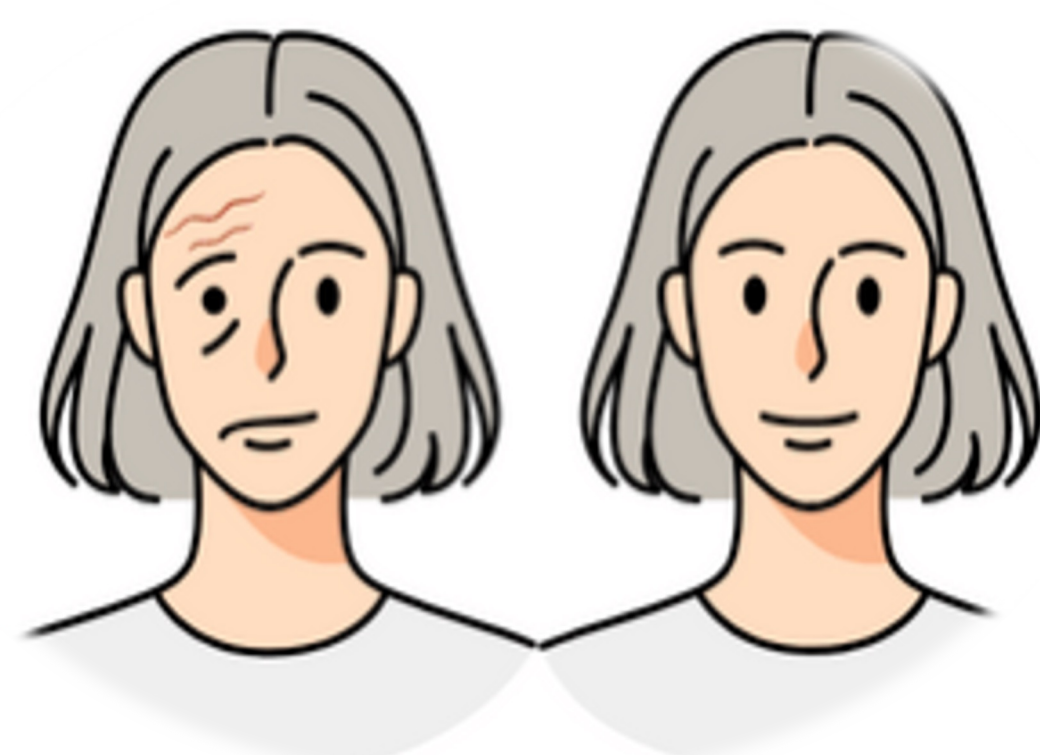
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## Background and Aim

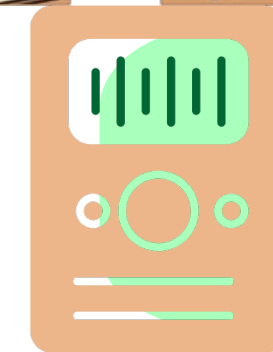


- Facial palsy after stroke is a common sequela [1].
- Facial palsy is a highly visible, appearance-affecting condition that can have a significant impact on speech, facial movements, and eating, ultimately affecting quality of life [2].
- Understanding the lived experiences of stroke survivors with facial palsy is important for improving rehabilitation outcomes.
- This study aims to explore the experiences of stroke survivors with post-stroke facial palsy, including how facial palsy affects daily life and experiences of improvement and treatment offered.

## Method



Interviewed stroke survivors with facial palsy, 6 months after stroke



Audio recorded, anonymised transcript



NVivo 12 software for coding and theme development



Thematic Analysis for data analysis

## Results



14 stroke survivors with facial palsy

- 12 male – 2 female, age range 39-96 years
- Ethnicity: 13 White British – 1 Asian Pakistani
- 4 live alone – 10 with family/partner
- Employment: 10 retired - 2 self-employed – 1 full time – 1 unemployed
- Hemisphere of stroke: 8 right hemisphere – 6 left hemisphere

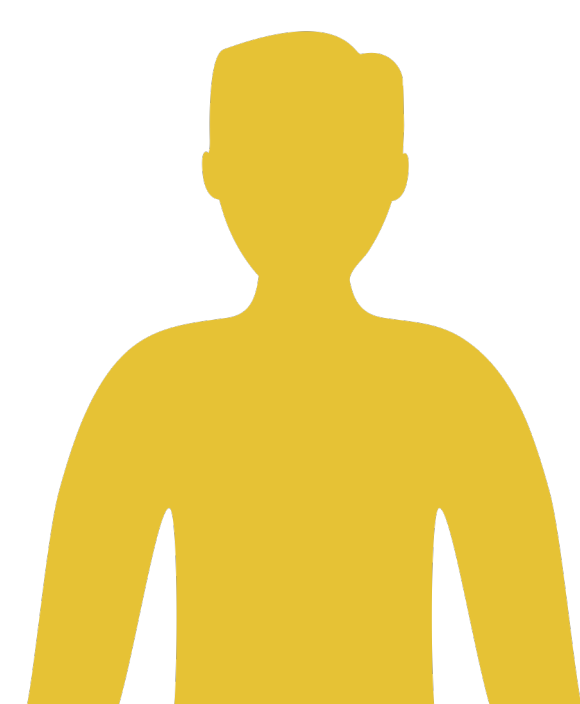
NIHSS on admission:

- Minor: 3 patients
- Moderate: 9 patients
- Moderate to severe: 2 patients

Facial palsy scores:

- Minor: 8 patients
- Partial: 4 patients
- Complete: 2 patients

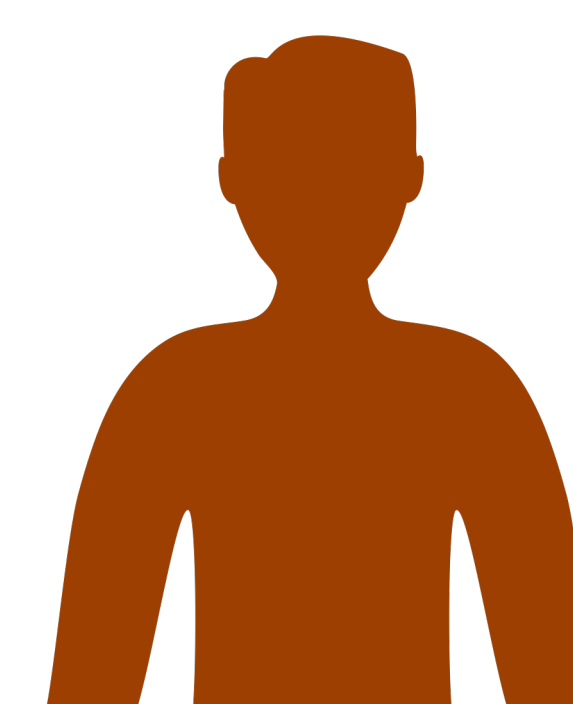
### FACIAL APPEARANCE



- Drop the corner of the mouth
- Floppy skin
- Stiffness in the facial expression
- Weak eye closure
- Asymmetric face

### LOW MOOD

- Upset
- Low confidence
- Low self-esteem



### OROMOTOR FUNCTION

- Biting cheek/tongue
- Dribbling (eating/walking/tired/sleeping)
- Eating/swallowing problems
- Chewing habits

### SENSATION

- Loss of sensation
- Strange feeling
- Feeling swollen, fluffy inside the cheek
- Pain, discomfort

### PHYSICAL IMPACT

### PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

EXPERIENCES OF STROKE SURVIVORS WITH FACIAL PALS

### COPING STRATEGIES

### FRUSTRATION

- Anger
- Annoyance
- Frustration over long recovery period

### SELF-IMAGE

- Worried perception by others
- Hiding face
- Positive outlook
- Not bothered / not realise

### COPING WITH PHYSICAL IMPACT

- Eating strategies and dietary adaptation
- Using tissue to manage drooling
- Touching, rubbing face
- Growing beard / having hair to hide face

### COPING WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

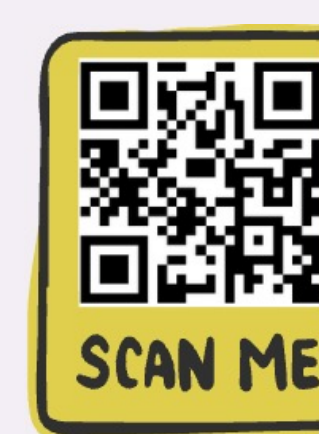
- Acceptance
- Comparing oneself with others who are worse off
- Social support

## Conclusion

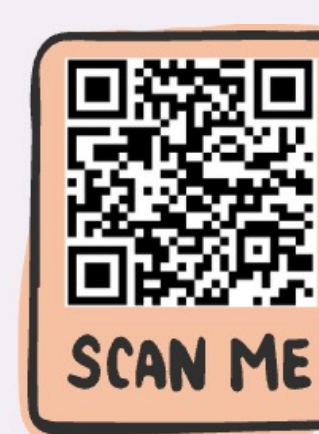
- Post-stroke facial palsy has physical and psychological impacts on survivors.
- Stroke survivors appear to adopt a range of self-initiated coping strategies and often navigate their recovery with limited guidance, as facial palsy is frequently not addressed through active interventions by healthcare professionals.

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1. Mitchell et al. Aphasiology. 2021;35(7):950-960. 2. Konecny et al. J Rehabil Med. 2011;43(1):73-75.



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