

What Works on the Ward: A Rapid Literature Review of Inpatient Stroke Psychotherapy Groups

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Introduction

Evidence posits that in the first year of post-stroke recovery, approximately one third of stroke survivors experience depression (Hackett et al., 2005) and 29.3% experience some form of anxiety disorder (Rafsten et al., 2018).

This psychological distress is often in response to a shift or loss in their identity, emotional adjustment difficulties or uncertainty around coping with any long-term functional impairments (Salter et al., 2008).

Depression and anxiety may impede a patient’s willingness to engage in their functional therapies, hindering and slowing their recovery process (Butsing et al., 2024). This highlights the need for psychological therapies to coexist and complement functional therapies. But, despite this awareness, there has been limited research on how specific psychotherapies can be implemented in inpatient settings.

Primary Objective

Which group psychotherapy is most effective for inpatient stroke populations?

Secondary Objective

What features of the therapy make it effective?



Methodology

The PSYCINFO database was systematically searched using three primary inclusion criteria and specific exclusion criteria:



Studies of stroke populations



Unpublished work



In an inpatient setting



Groups for other neurological disorders



Group-based psychotherapeutic interventions



Studies on patient-caregiver dyads

Results

- 8 publications employed groups in an inpatient stroke setting
- 6/8 studies found stroke groups to be effective in enhancing mood

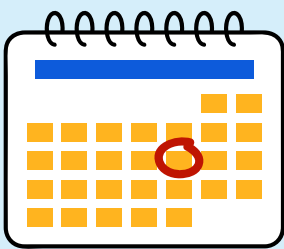
Specific groups highlighted were:

Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy

Group Psychotherapy

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Peer Support



Regular sessions for consistency and routine



Rolling programme to account for drop-out



Group formats encourage social connection and relatability compared to individual therapies



Mindfulness-based work was the most effective technique in enhancing mood

Conclusion

This rapid review identified mindfulness-based practice as a key component of successful group psychotherapy for stroke inpatients with specific therapies such as Acceptance Commitment Therapy and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy recognised as feasible options. Whilst a small sample limits the generalisability of these findings, it highlights a distinct research gap. Future research should focus on implementing these groups to establish an evidence base.

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