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The effect of goal setting interventions for patients with acquired brain injury

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Introduction

Patients with acquired brain injury (ABI) experience different degrees of physical, cognitive and psychosocial challenges, in relation to nature and location of brain injury. In view of patients' heterogeneity, each ABI patient has unique rehabilitation needs at different recovery stages. Patient-centred approach is commonly adopted for rehabilitation recently in order to meet individual's needs, with evidence supporting treatment gains from meaningful in-patient rehabilitation were more likely maintained and transferred to the community after discharge. Since ABI patients often experience difficulty in organizing and developing efficient strategies for performing daily activities, setting directive goals motivates their participation, while goal planning and continuous monitoring promote successful goal attainment. Goal Management Training (GMT) provides a structured framework to facilitate goal attainment by preventing error and goal neglect, and promoting active participation in their rehabilitation process.

Objectives

(1) To study the effect of GMT on patients' goal attainment, perception of physical and psychological changes, (2) to describe patients' acceptance and satisfaction with GMT, and (3) to discuss its clinical implications as a mean for patient engagement and goal attainment in a rehabilitation hospital setting.

Methodology

In this case series, three participants with ABI received GMT during their in-patient stay for 4 weeks, working towards their two identified rehabilitation goals of activities of daily living, work or social participation. Measurement of goal attainment and quality-of-life were obtained before and after intervention. Semi-structured interview for qualitative data collection was conducted after intervention to record participants' experiences towards GMT.

Result

Participants showed progress towards their goals after 4-week intervention (average improvement= 45.93%). There were 3 out of 6 goals achieved as expected, 1 goal achieved slightly better than expected and 2 goals partially achieved. Increasing trends for self-perceived physical conditions (average improvement= 18.43%), and different directions of changes for self-perceived psychological conditions (average change= -2.6%) in relation to adjustment of coping of new health experiences, were noted. Participants appreciated the goal-setting intervention, as a patient-centred and active-participated rehabilitation process. With GMT framework, participants reported higher motivation to rehabilitation and better therapeutic relationships. To conclude, GMT conducted to in-patients with ABI could be a step to promote patient engagement and enhance their rehabilitation process, with optimal psychosocial support and problem-solving skills reinforcement. Nonetheless, sufficient time and resources input were inevitable, yet a challenge, to rehabilitation settings in Hong Kong.