

Vocational rehabilitation for young stroke survivors in Gauteng public healthcare: Occupational therapists' attitudes and perceptions

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Introduction / Rationale: The prevalence of young stroke survivors is increasing yearly, which is causing occupational therapists to move their focus away from basic activities of daily living, such as eating and grooming, to rehabilitating work. Stroke is an expensive disease causing financial burden the government, the family and caregivers of the patient, thus making it imperative for young stroke survivors to work to remain financially independent.

Objectives: This research study aimed to determine the perceptions and attitudes of occupational therapists working with younger stroke survivors in Gauteng hospitals and clinics towards rehabilitation for work. Ethical clearance was granted from the University of the Witwatersrand HREC.

Method: A qualitative research design was used to obtain narrative, descriptive data from focus groups. Therapists from public health care settings, who have more than six months' experience and have worked in neurological rehabilitation within the last six months, were invited to participate in the focus groups, which were audio recorded and transcribed. Data were analysed by inductive coding based.

Results: The study found that few alarmingly OTs are involved in rehabilitating younger stroke survivors' work ability and facilitating return to work. The study identified perceived barriers and enablers to rendering OT services that meet the needs of working aged stroke survivors.

Conclusion: Employment equity laws encourage the employment of a diverse group of people in South Africa. Therefore, focusing on vocational rehabilitation with young stroke survivors will assist in creating a diverse workplace, positively impacting our economy.