

Negotiation of relational and occupational changes in families' everyday life after stroke

Cathrine Arntzen^{1,2}, Torunn Hamran¹

¹*University of Tromsø, Tromsø, Norway*, ²*Division of Rehabilitation Services, University Hospital of North Norway, Tromsø, Norway*

Background: Stroke often leads to substantial occupational and relational changes for the family as a whole and challenges the reciprocal family structure.

Aim: This study explores stroke survivors' and relatives' negotiation of relational and occupational change in their interrelated long-term meaning-making processes of everyday life and what it means for the experience of progress and well-being.

Material and methods: Repeated retrospective in-depth interviews were conducted with both the stroke survivor and relatives. A Critical Psychological Perspective gives the frame of reference to study more closely what is going on in and across particular contexts.

Results: An asymmetric problematic relationship can develop among the participants in the context of family life. However, the analysis identifies six beneficial relational and activity changes, which contribute to a reciprocal, balanced repositioning, and help the family move in a more positive direction. The repositioning processes facilitate a new transformation of family we-ness, which is important for the participants' experience of process and well-being. The comprehensive family work that has to be done is about managing the imbalance of everyday life, upholding separate activities outside the family sphere and dealing with the fact that peripheral others become more peripheral.

Conclusion/Implications for OT practice: The study addresses some arguments for taking a family-centered perspective in occupational therapy practice, as well as in stroke rehabilitation service in general. This study shows how self-management programs can support families in their on-going repositioning work toward regaining valued activities, role management and a positive sense of self.