



What skills and attributes do health professionals need when working in the home to provide rehabilitation?

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Background

- Home Based Rehabilitation Program (HBRP) services have acquired an increasingly important profile with financial advantages and significant rehabilitation benefits (Taylor et al. 2010; Bader, 2013; Iyengar et al., 2007; Mayo et al., 2000)
- Evidence from nursing research suggests that delivery of care within the home requires specialist skill (McVeigh, 2006) Anecdotally, allied health professionals working in HBRPs report their area of work also require specialised skills however there is no research evidence to support this from the health professional or consumer perspective.
- This study sought to explore what skills and attributes are required by health professionals when providing rehabilitation to consumers in their own homes.

Method

- This study utilised a mixed methodology research approach
- Consumers and health professionals were invited to complete separate surveys that explored their perspectives on the skills and attributes required by health professionals who provide rehabilitation services within the home.
- Consumers were previous clients from the Barwon Health Home Based Rehabilitation Program
- Health Professionals were nurses and allied health professionals who worked in home based programs in Victoria, Australia
- Data from the open ended questions was coded and thematically analysed

Results

- 27 consumers returned surveys by mail, 83 health professionals responded to a survey monkey questionnaire
- The health professional group comprised allied health professionals and nurses with 85% of the staff having more than 5 years clinical experience and 40% having more than 5 years experience in home rehabilitation
- Themes were identified from the data that described skills and attributes required to provide rehabilitation services at home by both consumers and health professionals

Discussion

- The results of this study support the idea that delivery of care within the home is complex and different to a centre (McVeigh, 2006) with 88% of respondents reporting feeling they face challenges when working in the home and 94% of respondents report finding working in the home environment different from other work environments
- Despite this, this work environment is very satisfying with 97% of health professionals respondents reporting feeling very satisfied when working in their home based rehabilitation positions
- Three themes were identified through the consumer feedback and the health professional surveys to describe what skills and attributes health professionals need when working in the home to provide rehabilitation:

1. Occupational Health and Safety knowledge, awareness and skill (Environmental hazards, Personal hazards, Manual handling in the context of the home)

“Manual Handling Skills are important as you have less equipment, less hands on deck and clinical expertise around you when you are in the patient’s home. Therefore your skills in this area are really tested.”

2. Clinical skill (Clinical knowledge and competence; Good communication skills; Good problem solving skills in response to a dynamic, unpredictable work environment- ‘the home’; Confidence to work autonomously and Acknowledgement of the advantage of the interdisciplinary team)

“Ability to think ‘on your feet’ and creatively use the client’s home environment and community as rehab tools”

3. Patient centred care (Patient preferences over health professional goals, Empathy and compassion, Patience and tolerance, Respect for the consumer’s home)

“They [the health professionals] need to remember that they are entering the client’s home- their personal domain”

Conclusion

- The Home Based setting can be very satisfying for health professionals engaging in this work and for consumers receiving this service
- That there is an identified/ perceived difference in experience for health professionals when providing rehabilitation services in the home
- The home environment can be challenging for health professionals when utilising it as a setting for client rehabilitation
- The dynamic, complex setting of the home impacts on the skills and attributes health professionals use when working in this setting

Recommendations

Given the results from this study recommendations have been made:

- Recruit staff who have strong clinical, communication, problem solving skills who have the confidence to work autonomously in dynamic, unpredictable environments
- Ensure policies are in place to protect the health professional when they are working in the client’s home and community
- Provide ongoing professional development to staff working in the home; addressing clinical knowledge, Occupational Health and Safety, patient-centred care ALL within the context of ‘the home’
- Setup opportunities for personal and professional support and development- mentoring, supervision, reflective practice
- Ensure the consumer is always an active participant in the episode of care experience at all times

References: Bader, T. (2013). Home Based Rehabilitation for people with a stroke: An evaluation of efficacy. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation* 15(2): 83–9; Iyengar KP, Nadkarni JB, Ivanovic N, Mahale A. (2007). Targeted early rehabilitation at home after total hip and knee joint replacement: does it work? *Disability Rehabilitation*; 29:495–502; Mayo NE, Wood-Dauphinee S, Côté R, Gayton D, Carlton J, Buttery J, et al. (2000). There’s no place like home: an evaluation of early supported discharge for stroke. *Stroke*; 31: 1016–1023; McVeigh, H. (2006). A District Nurse’s experience. In *Fundamental Aspects of Community Nursing*. 18–32; Taylor RS, Dalal H, Jolly K, Moxham T, Zawada A. Home-based versus centre-based cardiac rehabilitation. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2010, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD007130. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007130.pub2

