

Sexuality after stroke- Not only a challenge for Occupational Therapy

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Background

Literature suggests that sexuality after stroke is often poorly addressed. The National Stroke Foundation (NSF) guideline 8.5, states that stroke survivors and their partners should be offered written information and the opportunity to discuss issues relating to sexuality. Occupational Therapists have been identified as playing an important role as key members of the multidisciplinary team (MDT) in providing education and information to patients.

Objectives

To evaluate current practice at Western Health in relation to the NSF guideline 8.5 and address gaps in MDT practice by building confidence and capacity of clinicians to address sexuality after stroke.

Method

A mixed methods approach to data gathering was undertaken including: documentation and organisational audit, literature review, staff survey and individual patient interviews.

Strategies implemented to address practice gaps included development of processes and guidelines, staff education forums and exploration of the MDT roles.

Results

Results indicated an absence of formal guidelines and inconsistencies in practice across the continuum of care. Staff lacked knowledge, confidence and resources to provide sexuality information and were not meeting NSF guideline 8.5. Interviews with patients revealed that patients want information on sexuality after stroke. Evaluation of staff education suggests improved staff knowledge, confidence, access to resources and understanding of discipline roles.

Discussion

Development of processes and guidelines together with education can impact positively on staff confidence and knowledge to provide information to patients regarding sexuality after stroke. Further evaluation is planned to determine if these changes have resulted in practice change.