

High level care discharges: a review of Occupational Therapists confidence and understanding.

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Background:

There exists a paucity of literature underscoring clinical reasoning in high level care (HLC) discharges home from acute and sub-acute hospital admissions. Increasingly clinicians are asked to facilitate the discharge of people requiring HLC back to their home environment. As Occupational Therapists' core business is maximising functional participation, we are required to facilitate such discharges despite the lack of clear guidelines. This study aimed to ascertain the level of confidence and understanding of Occupational Therapy (OT) staff in bed based services, to inform the development of HLC discharge clinical guidelines.

Method:

A review of existing literature regarding HLC discharges was conducted. OT staff from in-patient services, were invited to participate in an online survey exploring their understanding, confidence and experience with facilitating HLC discharges home. Data was analysed via mixed methodology including descriptive and thematic analyses.

Results:

Thirty five clinicians participated. Over half of the participants had more than 6 years clinical experience and 90% of participants considered organising a HLC discharge as an OT role. Exploration of clinician's understanding of HLC revealed requiring assistance with mobility/ transfers, equipment and activities of daily living as key themes. Clinicians identified key areas related to confidence in facilitating HLC discharges as equipment, training/ education and services. In regards to skills learnt as an undergraduate, 35% of respondents could not recall or reported undergraduate training did not contribute to their knowledge of HLC discharge. Inconsistency amongst multidisciplinary teams, timeliness and equipment were the themes identified as most challenging in HLC discharges.

Discussion:

Despite the apparent gap in clinician's confidence, understanding and preparation from an undergraduate perspective, readily available HLC guidelines remain elusive. It is critical HLC guidelines are developed and made available in order to facilitate safe, effective and consistent HLC discharges.

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