

Sustaining evidence in clinical practice: Introducing functional electrical stimulation (FES) across a large tertiary hospital

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Background: The National Stroke Foundation recommends functional electrical stimulation (FES) as one modality to address upper limb dysfunction post neurological event. Despite the availability of clinical guidelines, implementation to practice has been inconsistent.

This study explores how sustainable practice change was created to achieve consistent use of FES by occupational therapists (OT) at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

Methods: The knowledge-to-action framework was adopted for its proven efficacy in sustaining changes across all levels of healthcare through addressing both individual and organisational barriers to uptake.

A valid online survey tool was used to collect data pre and post the implementation of a tailored education package, measuring change in clinician's behaviour and confidence over a 12 month period.

Results: Lack of experience as a perceived staff barrier decreased from 62% to 37%, with staff confidence increasing to 37% from 12%.

91% of staff who had participated in the education package (intervention group) reported utilising FES in the past 12 months, compared to only 19% of the non intervention group.

The significant changes in behaviour and increased clinician confidence are directly attributable to the use of the tailored education package, which provided staff the opportunity to transfer knowledge from workshops/clinical guidelines directly into patient demonstrations, scenarios and co treatment sessions with the support of experienced key champions.

Discussion: The implementation of evidence based practices must target perceived barriers in order to change clinician behaviours and for staff to maintain their confidence, knowledge and skills.

Clinicians must have regular opportunities to transfer knowledge from workshops and clinical guidelines directly into clinical practice through a multi faceted training approach, which is dynamic and responsive to individual and organisational needs. The knowledge-to-action framework has provided a structured approach to ensuring the successful implementation of FES across the OT department of the Royal Melbourne Hospital.