Provision of Greater Intensity Therapy in Inpatient Rehabilitation: Three Hours of Therapy per Day
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Background

Research shows that people with stroke hospitalized in inpatient rehabilitation units spend most of their day inactive (48%), alone (54%) and in their bedroom (57%). This is contrary to the evidence demonstrating increased activity and environmental stimulation is important for neurological recovery.

Best Practice

Canadian Best Practice Recommendations for Stroke Care recommend a minimum of three hours of therapy per day.7

Stroke patients should receive, through an individualized treatment plan, a minimum of three hours of direct task-specific therapy by the interprofessional stroke team for a minimum of five days per week. (Evidence Level A) CBPR (2010) 5.3.ii

The Ontario Stroke Network Stroke Reference Group recommends inpatient rehabilitation facilities provide three hours of therapy per day, seven days a week.

In the United States, a minimum of 3 hours of direct patient-therapist time per day is required to receive funding.8

Challenge of Intensity

In Canada, the average person receiving inpatient rehabilitation gets approximately 1.5 to 2 hours of direct patient-therapist time per day.9

Therapy is cheap compared to length of stay, and less than 20% of the total hospital budget in inpatient rehabilitation is spent on core therapies.6

To achieve 20 minutes of real walking time, it can take up to an hour of therapy time.7

METHODS: A review of the literature was conducted using MEDLINE and CINAHL databases for studies contributing to the best practice recommendation related to therapy intensity in inpatient stroke rehabilitation. Studies published between 2000 and 2012 were included. Search terms used were stroke (or CVA or cerebrovascular accident) and rehabilitation or therapy (physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology, rehabilitation nursing) and duration, frequency and intensity. Reference lists of retrieved studies were also reviewed for further relevant studies.

RESULTS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study-Primary author</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code 2004.5</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>The results suggested both content and amount of therapy are important in gains in self-care and mobility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seite 2004.5</td>
<td>8,897</td>
<td>Higher nursing staff levels and therapy intensity are related to improved length-of-stay efficiency and increase the likelihood of patients being discharged to the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seite 2003.9</td>
<td>4,938</td>
<td>Higher therapy intensity was associated with increased length of stay and greater functional improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirk-Sanchez 2004.7</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>Augmented exercise therapy has a small but favourable effect on ADL. Also suggested clinically relevant treatment effects may be achieved on IADL and gait speed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabia 2011.9</td>
<td>2,686</td>
<td>Increased time spent on exercise and gait-related activities in the first 6 months post-stroke resulted in significant effects in terms of walking ability, walking speed, and extended ADL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang 2012.7</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>A significant relationship between therapist’s intensity of physical and functional gain during inpatient rehabilitation stay was demonstrated.</td>
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When treatments such as Constraint Induced Movement Therapy18, Body Weight Supported Treadmill Training19 and Robotic Therapy20 were compared in randomized controlled trials against therapy of equal intensity and duration, no statistically significant differences were found.

Conclusion

• There is strong evidence of a dose-response relationship between therapy intensity, functional recovery and discharge to the community.
• Patients who received total therapy time less than 3 hours per day had significantly lower total functional gain than those treated for greater than 3 hours per day.20
• Daily average and total amount of therapy time provided by Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, and Speech Language Pathologists are significantly correlated with gains in ADL, cognition and mobility as well as overall functional improvement on the Functional Independence Measure (FIM).5,9,20
• Core therapies of Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech Language Pathology have been shown to be most sensitive to intensity.20

Implementation Resources

http://www.ontariostrokenetwork.ca/rehab.php
http://swostroke.ca/videos/

Video: Time is Function
Three part video series shares the perspectives of stroke patients, family caregivers, staff and managers, regarding ideas for increasing therapy intensity and creating an active stimulating rehabilitation environment.

Practical Ideas:

References