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Community Stroke Recovery Programs – Effects on Community Reintegration, Participation and Quality of Life

BC Stroke Strategy Rehab & Community Reintegration Prototype Project

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Purpose: To evaluate an innovative stroke recovery program (SRP) and its impact on community reintegration, participation and quality of life for stroke survivors and their caregivers.

Conclusions:

- SRP participants experienced the same levels of enjoyment and quality of life as the control group despite lower participation diversity and greater impact of stroke on participation and overall recovery
- The SRP currently attracts people who are, in general, lower functioning than their control counterparts
- The importance of social network and cognition were clearly demonstrated for all participants
- The need to participate in meaningful activities and feel a part of community was strongly expressed by all participants of this study
- Transportation, accessibility, financial and social support concerns combine with physical and cognitive effects of stroke to make community reintegration and participation a challenge
- The SRP is perceived as a place for older, lower functioning stroke survivors who have plateaued in their recovery, preventing some stroke survivors from accessing its services.
- The SRP met its goal to serve stroke survivors who cannot return to their previous activities and social life but *did not meet* the need of younger or higher functioning stroke survivors

Future Directions

There is a demonstrated need to:

- Create more diverse types of programs in the SRP to attract a larger audience and benefit more stroke survivors earlier in the recovery process.
- Develop the SRP to be a means to an end, and not an end in itself.
 - Develop focused transitional recovery programs to compliment long-term maintenance programs and use resources accordingly.

- For higher functioning and younger stroke survivors, add programs such as vocational rehabilitation, exercises geared to higher ability levels and facilitate transportation access/returning to driving.
- Change public perception of the SRP
- Further develop a caregiver program at the SRP.
 - Social network and family support were identified by stroke survivors as critical facilitators for participation.
 - Reducing caregivers' burden will simultaneously enhance stroke survivors' support to reintegrate.
 - Peer support, information sharing and respite are important areas to develop.
 - Caregiver needs change over time so programs should address a range of needs.

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