

An exploration of the role of occupational therapists in addressing sexuality with service users post Stroke

Jessica Heron

Wrexham Glyndwr University, United Kingdom

Introduction: Research suggests stroke negatively affects sexuality yet is rarely addressed by healthcare professionals. This study aims to explore occupational therapists' perceptions of addressing sexuality post stroke with service users and whether they perceive it to fit into their scope of practice.

Method: A qualitative study was undertaken following an inductive reasoning approach. Three occupational therapists working within stroke rehabilitation were purposively recruited. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analysed using inductive thematic analysis to generate four significant themes.

Findings: Findings generated the following themes: (1) Acknowledging the impact stroke has on sexuality. (2) Consideration of the appropriate stage of the stroke

journey to address sexuality; identifying home/community environments to be more appropriate, utilising a multi-disciplinary approach to facilitate this. (3) Barriers to addressing sexuality, including staff's personal feelings, inexperience, limited resources and ageism. (4) Facilitators to addressing sexuality, including approaching the topic appropriately and utilising the role of occupational therapy and resources.

Conclusion: This study highlights the gap in the stroke journey where sexuality lies and the role occupational therapists can play in closing this gap. Utilising facilitators such as resources and a multi-disciplinary approach can overcome barriers to practice including embarrassment, prejudice and inexperience.

e: jessica.heron@wales.nhs.uk