



Review Article

Scoping Review of Social Support Group Approach for Stroke Survivors

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Abstract

A stroke is a life-changing event and responsible for one of the main causes of mortality globally. Disability followed by stroke is an area of concern for the researcher in the past two decades. The caregivers are poorly trained and having very little knowledge and nursing skills to care about their patients. During patient stay in hospital and after discharge similar disease condition, patients and their caregivers can exchange very useful information about their patient's disease and coping strategies during rehabilitation and long-term care management. Social support groups are expected to play a very big role in a patient's recovery to routine life. Peer support group intervention is often recommended as an important source of psychological, emotional, and knowledgeable social support for people with chronic disease conditions. Peer support can offer an emotional support system to people who are suffering with similar disease condition and minor to major information about the patients care and rehabilitation can be very useful for long-term care. Peer support also empowers stroke survivors emotionally and gives them support as they are not alone with this condition. A number of research studies have noted benefits for both the person receiving support and the person providing support

Key words: Peer support, rehabilitation, stroke, support group

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What is stroke and recovery?

Stroke is a life-changing foremost source of disability in the adult population world widely. Stroke has been defined by the WHO as a clinical syndrome comprises the cerebral perfusion and rapidly developing clinical signs of focal disruption of brain functions.^[1] Stroke is not only the third major death-causing disease but also the fourth major malefactor causing disease load globally and affected nearly 750,000 people in the United States with 80% as 1st time events annually.^[1,2] Social engagement is appraised as an important factor for successful rehabilitation after a stroke

stroke. Fortunate healing from a stroke can resultant in an improved outcome, quality of life, and degree of involvement in routine life equal to that before the stroke event.^[3]

Long term impact of stroke on health

Stroke comes with complex challenges for survivors including physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and emotional disturbance.^[4] Regardless of the severity of disease and progressive age, stroke impacts the quality of life. The level of physical independence depends on the degree of stroke severity and brain area involvement. After stroke patients faced issues as such malnutrition, deep vein thrombosis, joint and skin abnormalities, persistent bladder, and bowel difficulties contribute significantly to recovery towards a normal life after stroke.^[5]

Long-term conditions like stroke are causing a severe burden on the national health care system and society as approximately 90% of stroke survivors face some kind of disability. They found it difficult to gain the same power and physical strength after stroke events patients may have a complete range of barriers to recovery and further limited participation in daily activities.^[6] Stroke is among

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the leading causes of adult death and functional disability globally.^[7] Since the last decade, the incidence of stroke has increased by 20% worldwide, especially in low- and middle-income countries.^[2]

Stroke and psychological health of survivors

Psychological rehabilitation and adaptation of stroke survivors are difficult, mainly because of sudden role changes and limitations in family and society. Therefore, the paramount importance of post-stroke recovery is to improve home-based care toward self-independence through psychological and psychosocial interventions.

While depression is also common after a stroke, many studies reported depression as one of the most underdiagnosed and underrated complications after a stroke.^[4] Survivors are not much explained and informed about the future course of treatment, recovery possibilities, risk factors, and why they had a stroke.^[8] Studies reported good social support to have a low risk of mortality as compared to patients with less social relationship access.^[5] This area of support group research is in its infancy and researchers are enthusiastic to understand the phenomena of family and social support distinctly towards comprehensive patient care and rehabilitation to independent life.

Stroke burden on Carers

Caregivers are the individuals who provide unconditioned care for the family members who have been troubled by chronic disease. Stroke has a remarkable negative impact on carer well-being.^[9] Many studies depicted the poorer health status of survivor's families and caregivers than the general population when involving in some type of long-term caregiving. Sometimes, the main caregiver is the bread earner of the family and they end up in a financial crisis.^[10] Hence, stroke survivor's caregivers are highly prone to develop the risk factors for stroke including anxiety, insomnia, and depression because of long-term care to their loved ones and another long-term disease probably due to shared environment, sudden financial burden, and stress.^[11,12] Examine the possible effect of stroke, it is unsurprising that family members also noticeably get affected.

Social support group therapy

The peer support mentions to someone who has gone through a similar experience and obtains knowledge from his happening during the period rather than ritualistic training. Peer support is offered to submit emotional, knowledge, and assertion support to enhance psychological, communal, and physiological health well-being. Support groups have been reported a lot of advantages in literature in many chronic diseases condition including head injury, renal failure, and heart disease.^[12] Some chief elements of support group therapy compromise mutual consensus

of offering and accepting support, self-esteem, shared responsibilities, and encouragement of recovery hope. There are three crucial accredit of peer support groups available during inquiring about the research literature.

Emotional support

People who share common disease background and experiences facilitate them to discuss individual problems and similar threats of self-esteem with each other. This covers the impression of care, reassurance to promote acceptance, and value.

Knowledge and informational support

Sharing own lived experiences and perceived knowledge over the period while caring for their family member with similar conditions.

Assertion support

The conveying of knowledge is for self-appraisal and the suitability of sentiments, perception, and behaviors. Employing peer support as mediation could be highly beneficial to well-being in both the physical and psychological health of stroke survivors. Support group intervention also provides an opportunity for survivors to open up their thoughts, feelings, and share their experiences about their moments of suffering, treatment, and issues they are facing during treatment. It can help survivors and their caregivers to explore other ways of dealing with similar problems they are facing.^[13] Nowadays, rehabilitation experts are keen to involve social support in their treatment plans. Social support intervention has consequently beneficial effects on long-term stroke rehabilitation. Figure 1 depicts the formation and the main purpose of the support group, as the members come together to share their problems, their ideas to overcome their issues, and common coping strategies to empower them toward returning to the independence of life. These groups also work to inform the public as well as engage in advocacy. Several studies conducted on the effectiveness of the support group approach among chronic patient conditions (dementia, stroke, schizophrenia, depression, cancer, and Alzheimer's disease) have reported that social support groups and self-help groups are effective in reducing complications and suffering among survivors and caregivers.^[7]

Resettlement in Society

Realizing the extensive scope of psychological challenges announced by stroke victims and caregivers following a stroke, the importance of emotional support is essential mainly more relevant sooner after leaving health-care settings.

Peer support has recognized as a crucial aspect during recovery from stroke and proved to be supportive of minimizing feelings of isolation and fear. Suggestions secure from a peer patient about the experience of living

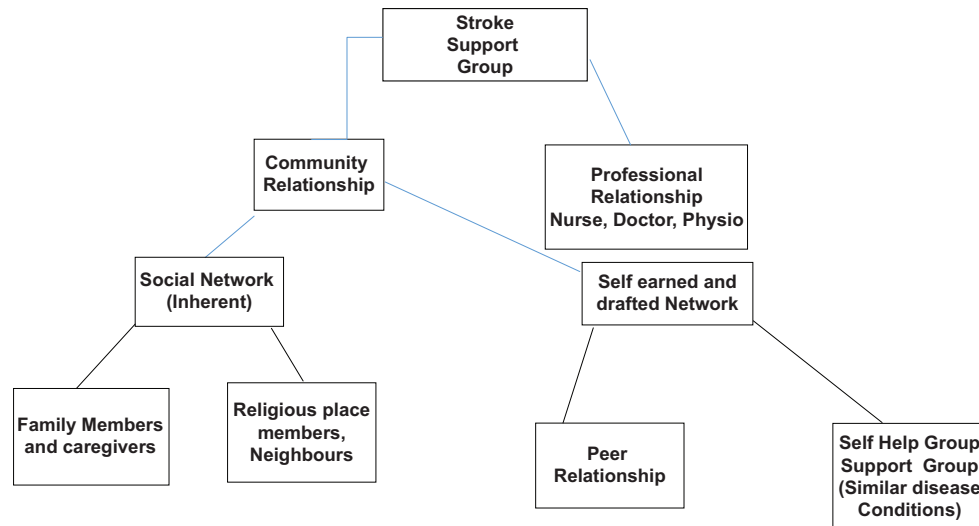


Figure 1: Support group structure

with stroke could be given much more important than that obtains from health-care professional.

Following the literature discussed in this paper, it is found unarguably that stroke survivors and their carer taking part in peer support programs expecting to appreciably lower emotional distress, reported beyond other physical problems. Stroke survivors can access support groups even from websites, their community areas, or from health-care settings they discharged after stroke treatment.^[14]

For stroke patients, their support groups include their family, friends, and community as well. Patients with a relatively moderate network of social support are exposed to the risk of psychological and psychosocial problems as compared to those having strong social networking.

A study by Morris and Morris reported benefits of participating in a support group included helpful information, advice, making new contacts, and increased awareness of stroke. Responses suggested that attendance brought therapeutic gains.^[15] Innovative and sustainable support initiatives are required for the optimum improvement of stroke survivors. Peer support intervention is a low or no cost way to support the rehabilitation of recent stroke survivors.

Morris and Morris explained the experiences of peer supporters, stroke survivors, and caregivers from hospital-based peer support groups. The study revealed the value of peer support in emotional and psychological encouragement and empowerment of survivors. While there are clear benefits of group-based programs, it is also clear that there are challenges to offering such programs in the acute care setting. Notably, peer supporters affirmed the importance of thorough training as few aspects of the program such as open-ended discussions were experienced negatively by some participants.^[10]

In an acute care setting, individual peer support programs may better respond to issues related to scheduling group

meetings, while allowing for brief sessions and tailoring communication to address specific patient questions or concerns. However, it is not known if individual peer stroke support programs provide benefits similar to those offered by group programs.

Studies of the experiences of peer support by women with breast cancer depicted that they find it useful to meet and talk to another breast cancer survivor.^[16] Similarly, peer support intervention among brain cancer survivors support programs showed benefits with positive effects for psychoeducational or psychosocial interventions. These interventions resulted in lower rates of anxiety, depression, nausea, and pain. Participants had a greater increase in knowledge regarding their disease and treatments, compared to their other groups who have not received such interventions.^[17]

Altogether, research shows that peer support can help to enhance the overall well-being of stroke survivors with illness, disease, or a stigmatizing health condition.

Limitation of support group intervention

As the available and reviewed literature, few of the prominent researchers recognize the shortcomings in its implication and assessment of support group intervention. Dennis (2003) reported that “peer support group intervention is a complex phenomenon whose application is vague and highly variable.”^[18] A systematic review by Lloyd-Evans *et al.* (2014) depicted poor quality of available literature supporting the peer support group intervention and association with psychological health.^[19] The importance of studying support group is much important for broadening our perception of links among peer support in its diverse way and social separation itself noted as an unconstrained vital element for mortality.^[20,21]

Conclusion

Support group initiative for stroke survivors appears outlying globally. These groups have the power to

provide much required reinforcement to stroke survivors and to encourage the well-being of peer supporters. The support group minimizes the risk of social isolation and facilitates community participation and the most possible powerful form of help for individuals after a stroke strike. Mutual identification of shared experiences and a sense of belonging that develops through supportive interventions are thought to impact psychological outcomes positively.

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