Title: Group exercise class for people with chronic stroke: A service improvement programme

Praveen Kumar, University of West of England, Bristol

Rebecca Shelly – Bristol Area Stroke Foundation

Introduction: Individuals with stroke are less physically active and have increased risk of secondary problems such as weakness, fear of falls, loss of confidence, social isolation and depression leading to increased disability. Group exercise classes have shown beneficial effects in people with neurological conditions. The aim of this pilot work was to assess the benefits of group exercise class in people with chronic stroke.

Methods: People with chronic stroke were recruited from the community. Pre and post rehabilitation outcomes included: Timed up and Go (TUG), Berg Balance Scale (BBS) Score, Motor Assessment Scale (MAS-upper limb section), and patients/family member’s perception of perceived benefits. Patients’ received 8 weeks (1 hour/week) of group exercise class which included warm up and flexibility exercises in sitting, dynamic balance exercises, gait re-education and upper limb exercises. Patients were encouraged to maintain a diary of exercises / activities practiced at home.

Results: Ten patients (8 men / 2 women) with mean age 53±8 years were included in the exercise class. Compliance was good and 2 patients missed 2 sessions due to prior medical appointments. Pre and post rehabilitation measurements showed mean difference of 1.5 seconds on TUG and 4 points on BBS but no difference for MAS score. Both patients and family members reported following benefits: socialisation, increased confidence in mobility, increase in distance walked outdoor and more engagement with exercises.

Conclusion: The 8 weeks of group exercise programme showed some improvement in balance, mobility and confidence in people with chronic stroke. The other perceived benefits included motivation and socialisation.