

Darby, J.(1) Edmans, J.(1) Logan, P. (1) Williamson, T. (2) Taylor, J. (2) Gladman, J. (1) University of Nottingham (1), University of Salford (2).

An exploration of daily living needs of older people following hospital discharge

Introduction

Older people discharged from emergency departments experience difficulties with daily living activities (Hendriksen & Harrison 2001). Often patients are transferred from the emergency department to acute medical units for further assessment and treatment before being admitted to a ward or discharged home. This study explored the daily living needs of older people following discharge from an acute medical unit.

Method

Eighteen older patients (70 years plus) and their informal carers were purposefully selected for this constructivist study from a larger trial being conducted of frail older patients discharged from an acute medical unit. Occupational therapy was not routinely provided on the acute medical unit. Patients being discharged directly home were eligible. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in participants' homes up to six weeks following discharge. Thematic analysis was undertaken.

Results

Older patients perceived that they had on-going difficulties with their everyday activities. These difficulties were attributed to physical, psychological and social factors. These outstanding problems led their carers to take on additional roles providing both physical and psychological support. Participants resisted relinquishing some of their daily activities. These activities were affiliated with their values and roles and provided enjoyment, purpose, and a distraction from anxieties.

Conclusion

Older patients being discharged directly home from acute medical units had ongoing daily living needs which may be amenable to occupational therapy intervention. An emergency admission provides an opportunity for occupational therapists to identify older patients in need of such intervention.

References

Hendriksen, H. & Harrison, R.A. (2001). Occupational therapy in accident and emergency departments: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 36, 6, 727-732.