Guideline utilization by Swedish physiotherapists working with Parkinson's disease

This is a brief report of unpublished analyses of a longitudinal survey study regarding physiotherapy for people with Parkinson's disease (PD) in Sweden. The study is headed by the Karolinska Institutet. This report focuses on the utilization of physiotherapy guidelines.

Background

In 2015 a web-based, structured questionnaire was sent to all physiotherapists registered as members of the Neurology (n = 1009), Health of the Elderly (n = 1383), and Primary Care (n = 930) sections of the Swedish Association of Physiotherapists. Of the 2956 surveys that reached a recipient, 1189 physiotherapists (40% response rate) completed the survey.

Among the responders, 705 (59%) treated at least one person with PD per month and were included in the analysis. Work settings included the community (42%), primary care units (37%), and hospitals (21%). The baseline findings have been published [1].

When the baseline survey was conducted, no national guidelines existed. However, European guidelines were freely available. The European guidelines had included Swedish Physiotherapists and the Swedish Association in the development work.

In 2018, newly developed Swedish national guidelines were approved by the Swedish Association of Physiotherapists [2]. The guidelines were co-produced with Swedish physiotherapists by using a reference group and organizing a national workshop. Swedish physiotherapists independently prioritized key content and outcome measures based on their relevance and psychometric properties.

In 2022, a follow-up survey was conducted where 626 physiotherapists responded; the majority worked either in the community (34%), primary care units (41%) or hospitals (24%). Of the responding physiotherapists, 385 (61.5%) treated at least one person with PD per month and were included in the analysis. This proportion is similar to that at baseline (59%).

Unpublished longitudinal findings

- The baseline survey (2015) showed that only **11%** of physiotherapists utilized the European guidelines in their daily work. The follow-up survey in 2022 shows that **59.4%** of Swedish physical therapists used the new national guidelines in daily practice.

- In clinical practice, very frequent utilization of standardized outcome measures rose from 17% to 24%. Moreover, the proportion of physiotherapist that reported having sufficient skills and knowledge in relation to PD increased from 69.8% to 79.1%.

More detailed longitudinal analyses are ongoing by Assistant Professor Hanna Johansson and Professor Erika Franzén at the Karolinska Institute. E-mail: erika.franzen@ki.se

References

1. Conradsson D, Leavy B, Hagstromer M, Nilsson MH, Franzen E: Physiotherapy for Parkinson's Disease in Sweden: Provision, Expertise, and Multi-professional Collaborations. *Mov Disord Clin Pract* 2017, 4(6):843–851.
2. National guidelines (2018). Link

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