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Effectiveness of Support Groups for Stroke Patients

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Effectiveness of Support Groups for Stroke Patients

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Figure 1. The Catholic Health Services Logo.



Introduction

- Stroke support groups for discharged patients who were living in the community.
- Topics included: Medical aspect of a stroke, emotional changes, coping mechanisms, lifestyle changes, community reintegration, and stroke prevention.
- Increase the attendance of the stroke support group and create sessions that addressed the needs and wants of the participants.
- The focus areas for my capstone project were clinical skills and program development.

Site Description

St. Anthony's Rehabilitation Hospital

- Target population: Adults
- Services offered:
 - Aquatic therapy
 - Stroke rehabilitation
 - Outpatient specialty clinic
 - Orthopedic rehabilitation

Figure 2. The Pool at St. Anthony's Rehabilitation Hospital



Summary of Needs Assessment

- Previous stroke support group participant found it beneficial to learn about resources and solutions to challenges from stroke victims who were living in the community.
- Transportation was a barrier that affected the attendance of participants.
- Previous occupational therapists who oversaw the stroke support group have resigned.
- Time constraints and staffing made it difficult for current employees to invite discharged patients to the stroke support group and address transportation challenges.
- Potential solutions:
 - Participants to join the stroke support group through Zoom.
 - Zoom meetings will be recorded and posted to the facility's Facebook group.

Literature Review Summary

- Stroke survivors reported feeling abandoned and not having their needs met (Clark et al., 2020; Wijekoon et al., 2020).
- One-third of stroke survivors are affected by post-stroke depression and lack of family and social support is a risk factor (Christensen et al., 2019).
- Benefits of peer support include problem-solving occupational concerns, participation in meaningful occupations, a sense of belonging, finding a new purpose in life, continuous emotional and social support, better adjustment to life after stroke and changing roles, access to community resources, and disease management (Christensen et al., 2019; Clark et al., 2020; Erler et al., 2019; Wan et al., 2021; Wijekoon et al., 2020).
- Patients can also experience an increase in healthy coping, self-efficacy, self-esteem, empowerment, independence, motivation, knowledge, resilience, energy, confidence, hope for recovery, and a decrease in anxiety (Christensen et al., 2019; Clark et al., 2020; Elloker & Rhoda, 2018; Erler et al., 2019; Wan et al., 2021; Wijekoon et al., 2020).
- Barriers to in-person interventions include transportation, time, and post stroke fatigue which can be overcome using telehealth (Erler et al., 2019).

Figure 3. People in a Support Group.



Capstone Project Description

Limitations:

- COVID-19
- Change of management
- Difficulty contacting potential participants

The six stroke support group sessions that were held between April and August 2022 were designed to meet the needs and wants of the participants based on the information gathered during sessions.

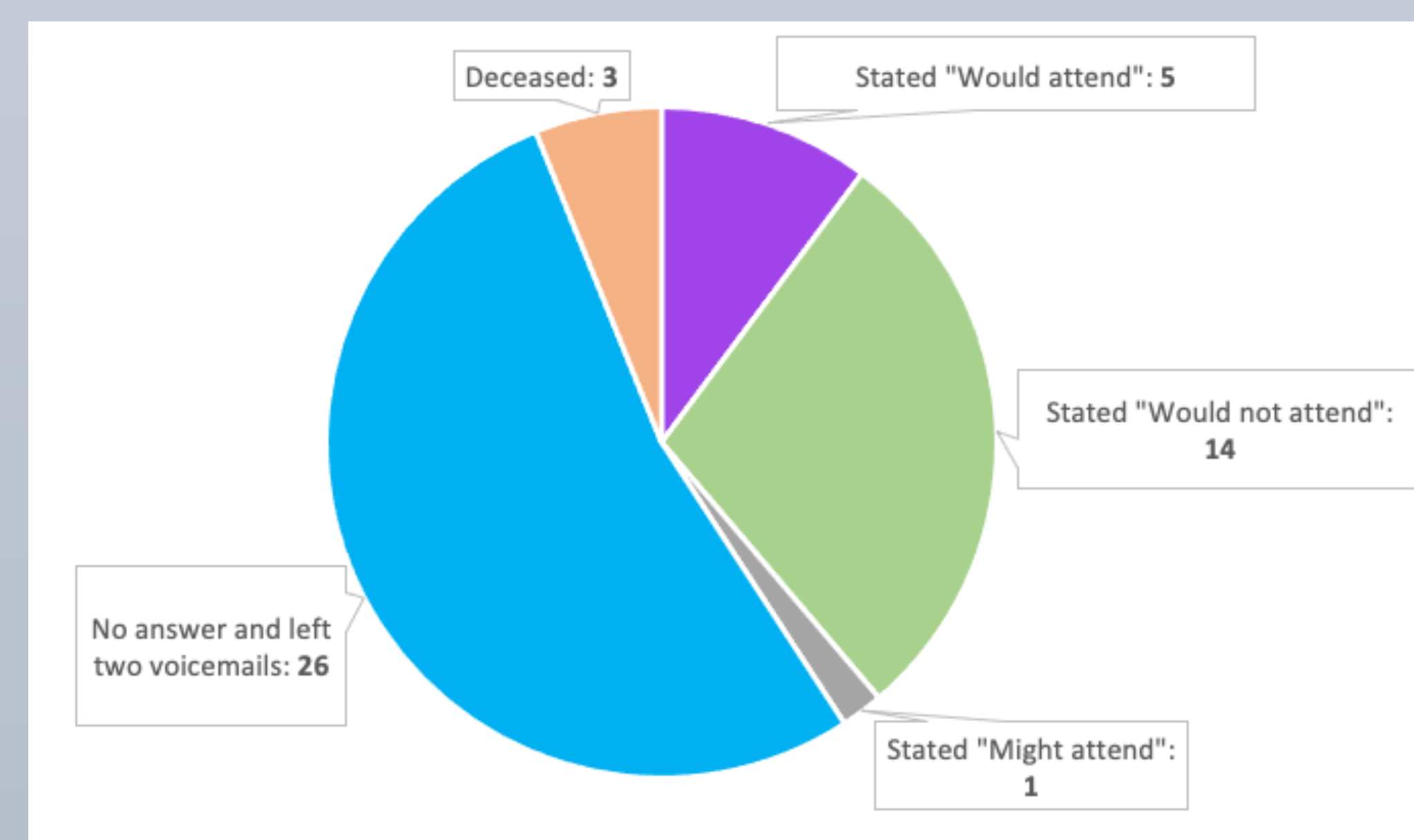
Some of the topics covered during these session included:

- Community re-integration post COVID-19
- Lifestyle changes
- Stroke prevention
- Stroke medical information
- Coping skills

Figure 4. Stroke Response Tips.



Table 1. Inviting Discharged Patients to Stroke Support Group Sessions.



Learning Objectives Achieved

- Invited discharged patients to stroke support group.
- Set up virtual access to stroke support group via Zoom.
- Created stroke support group sessions tailored to the needs of the participants.
- Improved my clinical skills in adult settings.

Figure 5. People Joining Hands.



Implications for OT Practice

- Stroke survivors experienced decreased occupational performance, disconnect from previous roles and occupations, and environmental isolation (Wijekoon et al., 2020).
- When an individual experiences a stroke their cognitive, physical, spiritual, and affective domains are affected which negatively influences occupational performance (Wijekoon et al., 2020).
- Engaging in meaningful occupations after hospital discharge can lead to increased quality of life (Wijekoon et al., 2020).
- Through stroke support groups occupational therapists can further aid discharged stroke survivors in problem solving occupational-related difficulties.
- Although the literature demonstrated benefits of support group participation, patients face barriers and demonstrate reluctance to participate which was evident by the high number of participants who declined.
- Suggestions for the future:
 - Therapists who lead the stroke support group sessions will be given a half day of work on Fridays and host stroke support group sessions off campus on the weekends.
 - Invite potential stroke group participants using phone calls and text messages from a company phone.
 - Set up an easy method for people to rsvp via text.
 - Make a video that contains information about the benefits of stroke support groups and information about our stroke support group and send it via text message and email.

REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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References Available Upon Request