Long-term life goals of patients with acquired brain injury

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Introduction
Rehabilitation after ABI is more successful when personally important goals are set, which are concurrent with one's life goals. More successful attainment is associated with better long-term quality of life. To identify these long-term goals mostly questionnaires, to complete via self-report or semi-structured interviews are used. Yet, it is not known whether the use of open questions versus self-report questionnaires is of influence on the type of goals or the themes/domains of goals that patients report.

Objective
The primary objective of this study was to identify long-term goals and their domains by using open questions in patients with ABI and stratify these goals according to gender and age. The secondary objective was to compare these domains with previous literature using standardized questionnaires or open questions to identify goals.

Methods: Data were collected from a prospective clinical cohort study of 148 patients with ABI after discharge home (mean time since injury was 15 weeks). During a telephone interview patients were asked to give the three most important, most valuable long-term goals, based on their current situation to achieve in about a year. Goals were specified and made measurable but not reviewed clinically to measure likelihood of achievement. Each goal was first coded by naming the central theme and next classified into a goal domain. Coding and classification was executed by the two authors and reviewed until consensus was reached. Domains were compared with the domains reported in previous research using descriptive statistics.

Results
The most important domains were work/study, recreation and physical function. Least important were self-care, pain, seizures, no symptoms and community participation. There were no big differences between the domains when stratified according to age or gender, except for work and study which is more important to patients younger than 50 years.

Conclusion: The same important domains were identified in an open inventory of Kuipers et al in a different population of patients with ABI. [1] Different important domains were reported in a study using standardized questions. Sivaraman Nair used the rivermead goals inventory in a population of progressive and neurological disorders where relationships and personal care were most important. * [2]. Possibly patients only see these goals as rehabilitation goals using methods where they are specifically mentioned. The use of both strategies, open questions and standardized questionnaires, might be complimentary to define the most important goals of patients.

Referenties