Appreciative action research to support the experience of multidisciplinary relationship-centred approaches on stroke units in England

C. Gordon¹, C. Ellis-Hill¹, C. Watkins², B. Dewar³

¹Bournemouth University, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Bournemouth, United Kingdom. ²University of Central Lancashire, Faculty of Health and Wellbeing, Preston, United Kingdom. ³University of the West of Scotland, School of Health - Nursing and Midwifery, Glasgow, United Kingdom.

What is already known

- Stroke improvements in England focus on national monitoring of **processes** and **outcomes** which do not account for patient, relative and staff **experiences**.
- Patients** and **relatives** ask for services to **focus as much on their personal recovery** as on their physical outcomes¹.
- Stroke unit healthcare **staff** feel increasingly disenfranchised with a heavy focus on procedural care².

What this project adds

This study used an appreciative action research approach to identify practices that supported meaningful stroke unit experiences for patients, relatives and staff.

Implications for practice

- The study identified practical approaches to enhance positive experiences for staff and service users in stroke services through supporting relationships.
- A contribution to the evidence for humanising relationship-centred approaches to stroke care.

Method

Two specialist combined stroke units in district hospitals in England participated in the study.

Participants included:

- Current stroke unit in-patients (n=17)
- Patient's relatives (n=7)
- Stroke unit staff (n=65)

Data were generated over 20 months:

- 16 semi-structured interviews
- 217 hours observing usual stroke unit activities
- 10 staff discussion groups

Analysis

- Participants **co-analysed** data during data collection.
- Further **in-depth analysis** was conducted by the authors to confirm themes and the processes that supported healthcare relationships.

Findings

Patients, relatives and staff all described the importance of **a human connection** in making healthcare experiences meaningful.

¹ Peoples, H., Satnick, T., Steultjens, E. (2011) Stroke survivors' experiences of rehabilitation: A systematic review of qualitative studies. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 18 (3), 163-171.

² Levack, W., Gerard Dean, S., Siegert, R., McPherson, K. (2011) Navigating patient-centred goal setting in inpatient stroke rehabilitation. *Patient Education and Counselling*, 85, 206-213.