



CLAHRCBITE

Brokering Innovation Through Evidence

May 2019

PhD study: Understanding the impact of dementia on access to stroke rehabilitation



The National Institute for Health Research Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (NIHR CLAHRC) Greater Manchester is a partnership between providers and commissioners from the NHS, industry, the third sector and the University of Manchester.

We aim to improve the health of people in Greater Manchester and beyond through carrying out research and putting it into practice.

What was the aim of the project?

This PhD is made up of three studies:

- A systematic review of factors influencing clinical decision-making about access to stroke rehabilitation
- A qualitative study with stroke clinicians about their experience working with people with pre-existing dementia and how pre-existing dementia influences their clinical practice
- A quantitative study describing whether there is a difference in amount of stroke-specific rehabilitation received by patients with and without dementia

What did we do?

This PhD used mixed methods to understand whether pre-existing dementia is a factor considered by clinicians when referring/admitting patients for rehabilitation, when providing rehabilitation interventions, and whether there is a difference in rehabilitation received by patients with and without pre-existing dementia.

What did we find?

This PhD identified that people with pre-existing dementia/cognitive impairment receive less rehabilitation when compared to those without. This may be, in part, due to clinicians' decision making about which patients should receive stroke rehabilitation.

Why is it important?

Stroke and dementia are associated with age and incidence of both is rising worldwide, increasing the likelihood of both conditions co-occurring. Older patients are



surviving stroke due to improvements in stroke care, which whilst positive, has multiple implications for rehabilitation service delivery. Pre-existing dementia is associated with poorer functional outcome after stroke. It is unclear however whether this is due to lack of access to, or inequality in, stroke rehabilitation.

Who did we work with?

Stroke services across Greater Manchester
Stroke patients
Clinicians working within stroke services in Greater Manchester

What next?

These findings have important clinical implications, particularly around the number of patients in stroke services with undiagnosed pre-existing cognitive impairment. Decisions can become more equitable by ensuring clinicians have access to relevant education, training and skills to work alongside patients with pre-existing dementia/cognitive impairments.

We are working with stroke services in Greater Manchester to implement changes based on the findings.

Further research is planned to explore the relationship between amount of stroke rehabilitation received and outcome for people with pre-existing dementia.

What is NIHR CLAHRC GM?

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Find out more

www.clahrc-gm.nihr.ac.uk/projects/phd-study-needs-of-people-with-vascular-dementia

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