HEALTH LITERACY IN A REHABILITATION SETTING

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Abstract
Health literacy is defined by the World Health Organization as “the cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to, understand, and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health” (Nutbeam, 1998, p.20). In a rehabilitation setting, health literacy is important in order to make informed decisions about healthcare and to communicate effectively with healthcare providers by understanding complex oral and written communication. However, communication barriers between healthcare providers and clients may occur due to a mismatch between the complexity of the communication from the healthcare provider and the patient’s health literacy level. This mismatch may be exacerbated for clients with a stroke due to the secondary effects of a stroke such as cognitive deficits and expressive and receptive aphasia. For example, these clients may have difficulty understanding oral or written information such as occupational therapy home exercise programs. This research examined the effectiveness of client-provider communication in an inpatient stroke unit. These data were gathered using a modified version of The Consumer Assessment and Healthcare Providers System (CAHPS) Item Set for Addressing Health Literacy and analyzed using SPSS v18. Descriptive and correlational analysis revealed strengths and weaknesses of client-provider communication in a stroke rehabilitation setting. For example, most healthcare providers did not use medical jargon when explaining health information to clients. These results will be used to identify strategies that could be implemented to improve the quality of client-provider communication so clients can make informed decisions about their healthcare.