

Feasibility and preliminary results of a short inpatient energy-management education for persons with MS-fatigue

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Research Objectives

To explore the feasibility, effect and costs of a newly developed inpatient energy management education (IEME)

Design

Feasibility randomized controlled trial with mixed methods analysis

Setting

3-week multidisciplinary inpatient rehabilitation

Participant

Random sample of 47 persons with MS-related fatigue (FSS >4), >18 years, EDSS (≤6.5). Exclusion criteria: depression or cognitive impairment

Interventions

Six IEME (intervention) or progressive muscle relaxation (PMR; control) group sessions (1x6h) during a personalized rehabilitation program. IEME was led by an occupational therapist (OT). An individual introduction session was followed by five group sessions on break management, occupational balance, ergonomics, activity analysis, communication. Participants trained the use of energy conservation strategies and planned the implementation of behavioral change in their daily routine.

Main Outcome Measure(s)

User-experiences was assessed by focus groups and telephone interviews. Amount of group and individual OT-treatment minutes consumed. Change in fatigue impact, self-efficacy, occupational performance and quality of life between baseline (T0), discharge (T1) and 16 weeks follow-up (T2).

Results

IEME participants confirmed the adequacy of the developed program. OTs reported high treatment fidelity. Within-group difference on fatigue impact and some dimensions of quality of life (QoL) at discharge were significant ($p < 0.05$) in both groups. The IEME alone resulted in significant improvements in self-efficacy in performing energy conservation strategies ($p = 0.001$) and in the perceived physical functioning dimension of QoL, with large effect sizes at T2 ($d: 1.32$, $CI: 2.11 - 0.53$), despite less OT minutes.

Conclusions

IEME positively influenced the perception of competence in performing daily activities and reduced the perceived influence of MS-fatigue on physical functioning. This cost-friendly intervention may help persons with MS-related fatigue to better manage their energy.

Author(s) Disclosures: authors confirm NO affiliations or involvement in organizations with any financial interest.