

Quality of life in elderly stroke patients

Kvaliteta života starijih osoba nakon moždanog udara

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Introduction: Elderly stroke patients often have a reduced quality of life due to the consequences of the stroke. Functional independence in the elderly population who have suffered a stroke is one of the key aspects of their quality of life. Dependence on other people's help, particularly in activities of daily, walking, and other functions, are common problems for such patients. Older people, especially after a stroke, often need a strong social support to be able to fulfil their basic needs. Furthermore, the elderly often have modest social networks, they are less socially active, and often socially isolated, which is mostly caused by their physical and mental problems.

Aim: The aim of this paper was to establish a correlation between the quality of life and functional independence as well as with the social support the elderly stroke patients get.

Methods: The research included 50 respondents over the age of 65 who had suffered a stroke. All of them lived at home and were residents of Zagreb. The participants' quality of life was measured by the WHOQOL BREF questionnaire, their functional independence was measured by the Functional Independence Measure (FIM), and the social support by the Social Support Scale.

Results: Statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) was found in the correlation between the physical health domain of the quality of life and functional independence ($\rho = 0.77$; $p = 0.00$), and in the correlation between the mental health domain of the quality of life and functional independence ($\rho = 0.53$; $p = 0.00$). Statistical significance was also found in the correlation between the social support (social support of friends) and the social relationship domain of the quality of life ($\rho = 0.40$; $p = 0.00$), as well as between the social support of friends and the environment domain ($\rho = 0.45$; $p = 0.00$). Statistical significance was also found between the total social support and the social relationship domain ($\rho = 0.29$; $p = 0.04$), and between the total social support and environment domain ($\rho = 0.35$; $p = 0.01$).

Conclusion: Functional independence in elderly stroke patients is an important aspect of their total quality of life, particularly in the physical and mental health domains. It seems that social support of friends aids better integration of this vulnerable group of elderly stroke patients into their social environment reducing their feeling of loneliness and at the same time improving their quality of life.

Keywords: functional independence; stroke; social support; elderly.

LITERATURE

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