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Title

Stroke recovery - what are people talking about on Twitter?

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Cardiovascular disease

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: To aid prioritisation of funding for stroke research, a Stroke Priority Setting Partnership is being conducted in the UK by The Stroke Association using surveys and workshops with stroke survivors, stroke carers and health professionals. Another valuable source of information about topics that require research is the social media platform Twitter. Objective: To ascertain common topics of discussion in relation to stroke recovery on Twitter amongst stroke survivors, their carers, and the general public. Study design and analysis: Content analysis of public posts on Twitter. Dataset: An electronic search of Twitter was performed to analyse the content of two major stroke discussion tags: #strokesurvivor and #strokerecovery. Tweets were collected using NCapture, an open-source extension for the internet browser Chrome. Tweets spanning 5 weeks over the course of January to February 2021 were analysed. Population studied: Tweets made by stroke survivors and their carers or other interested members of the public were included and those made by health professionals or organisations (e.g. charities or health care providers) were excluded. All tweets were fully anonymised and edited where necessary to omit any identifying information. Outcome measures: The content of each tweet was analysed thematically using NVIVO, with tweets being coded by their content and sentiment to identify trends in discussion. Results: 486 tweets were analysed following the removal of duplicate and unrelated material. From these, 6 themes were identified: motivation & positivity; raising of stroke awareness; experience of the stroke rehabilitation process; symptomatic aspects of stroke recovery; sharing of stroke-related resources; and concerns about COVID-19. Conclusions: Twitter's role as a space for peer-support and motivation amongst survivors was evident, as was its potential for promoting awareness of stroke and its sequelae to the public. Amongst the most prominent aspects of recovery discussed was the psychological impact of stroke, with users expressing difficulty in addressing the emotional sequelae in comparison to the physical aspects. This may be addressed by targeted funding of mental health services, and recognition of the specialised needs of stroke survivors. It is hoped that the findings of this project will be useful in guiding the apportioning of funding, as well as complementing the findings of the James Lind Alliance's Priority Setting Partnership.