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Dyadic interventions for stroke survivors and caregivers after discharge: a meta-analysis study

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Introduction: The first year post stroke is critical in the recovery process for both stroke survivors and for their caregivers. Due to the this criticism, several authors have developed and implemented interventions to improve either stroke survivors’ or stroke caregivers’ outcomes (i.e. quality of life, anxiety, depression, physical functioning etc.). However, recent studies have emphasized the importance of dyadic approaches when studying stroke survivors and caregivers. Considering the importance of dyadic perspectives in stroke care, it would be important to understand the effectiveness of the interventions developed and implemented to improve stroke patient and caregiver dyad conditions.

Purpose: The aims of this systematic review were to identify which interventions are implemented in stroke survivor-caregiver dyads’ outcomes (i.e. quality of life, anxiety, depression, physical functioning, activities of daily living and burden) and to analyze, through a meta-analysis, which intervention is the most effective.

Methods: We followed the guidelines recommended by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI), and we used the JBI Meta-Analysis of Statistics Assessment and Review Instrument (MAStARI) Software. The Joanna Briggs Institute approach for quantitative synthesis is pragmatic and aimed at identifying interventions and outcomes that may inform clinical practice through a rigorous method analogous to that used for qualitative meta-synthesis. A comprehensive search was conducted in May 2018 using the following electronic databases: PubMed, CINAHL and PsycInfo. Randomized Control Trails (RCTs) and Quasi-RCT studies, published within the last 10 years in English, French, Italian, Portuguese, or Spanish language, were included.

Results: The literature searches identified 2,343 records after the duplicates were removed; 35 citations fulfilled the inclusion criteria. After reading the full text, 20 articles were discarded. A total of 16 articles were included in the review. The included studies were published from 2009 to 2017. Three articles were Quasi-RCTs and thirteen RCTs. Regarding stroke survivors, studies observed significant improvements on stroke survivors’ physical functioning, activities of daily living, and depression through a dyadic intervention No significant differences were observed on generic and specific stroke survivors’ quality of life between the intervention and control group. Regarding the effect of dyadic interventions on stroke caregivers’ outcomes, no significant differences were observed on caregivers’ burden and quality of life between experimental and control groups.

Conclusions: This meta-analysis suggests that more dyadic programs are needed for addressing the mental health and quality of life of both stroke survivors and caregivers. The results of this meta-analysis provide moderate support for the use the dyadic intervention in improving stroke survivors’ physical functioning and caregivers’ depression.