

Stroke recovery linked to stimulating environment

July 31 2017, by Kirsten O'leary



Patients were encouraged to use stimulating resources such as iPads. Credit: University of Queensland

A Queensland hospital has become the first to trial how increased activity in an acute stroke unit impacts on patients.

Ingrid Rosbergen from The University of Queensland's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences said the study at Nambour General Hospital compared a sample of patients rehabilitated in an 'enriched' environment with patients rehabilitated in a 'usual' environment.

"Within the 'enrichment' model patients were encouraged to get out of their rooms and participate in group and communal activities as well as use stimulating resources such as iPads, music, newspapers, books and puzzles," Ms Rosbergen said.

"The 'enrichment' model implemented in the acute stroke unit resulted in a significant increase in physical, social and cognitive activity.

"Results were sustained six months post implementation and patients showed a significant reduction in adverse events."

The 'usual' environment in the acute stroke unit consisted of diverse therapists providing rehabilitation mainly within patient's rooms.

The 'enrichment' model included additional education and encouragement for patients, their families and hospital staff.

Patients, families and staff were provided with education about the benefits of increased activity on functional recovery after stroke and how they could contribute to recovery.

Families were requested to bring in the patient's clothes, hobby activities and photos and take patients out of the room and off the ward, when medically stable.

Patients in the 'enriched' acute stroke unit were significantly more active in a variety of areas.

Of patients in the 'enriched' environment group, 33 per cent were physically active, compared to 22 per cent from the 'usual' care group.

Forty per cent of the 'enriched' group were more social active, compared to 29 per cent, and 59 per cent were involved in [cognitive activity](#),

compared to 45 per cent for the 'usual' environment.

According to the Stroke Foundation, by the end of 2017 more than 470,000 people will be living with the effects of stroke, and this is predicted to increase to 709,000 by 2032.

"With the rising number of people affected by stroke, it is vital we improve the current model of rehabilitation to reduce the burden of stroke and find a cost-effective intervention possible within our current staffing," Ms Rosbergen said.

"The next step for our research is to expand on current evidence to shape the 'enriched' [environment](#) so it can be used in multiple acute [stroke](#) units across other hospitals."

The study was published in the *Clinical Rehabilitation* journal.

More information: Ingrid CM Rosbergen et al. Embedding an enriched environment in an acute stroke unit increases activity in people with stroke: a controlled before–after pilot study, *Clinical Rehabilitation* (2017). [DOI: 10.1177/0269215517705181](https://doi.org/10.1177/0269215517705181)

Provided by University of Queensland

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