



HOME CARE OF STROKE PATIENTS

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ABSTRACT

Stroke is a major global health problem and one of the leading causes of death and long-term disability. It results from the sudden loss of brain function due to disrupted blood flow, leading to inflammation, neuronal damage, and functional impairment. Worldwide, nearly 15 million people experience a stroke annually, and mortality remains high, especially in older adults. A significant proportion of survivors face varying levels of disability, requiring ongoing support and rehabilitation. Home care plays a critical role in improving recovery and quality of life for stroke patients. Key components include rehabilitation exercises to restore mobility and coordination, medication management to prevent complications, and wound care to reduce the risk of pressure sores. Adequate nutrition, hydration, and communication support are essential to address physical and cognitive challenges. Emotional support helps patients cope with anxiety, depression, and lifestyle changes. Safety precautions within the home environment further reduce risks and promote independence. A comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach supports functional recovery and enhances long-term outcomes for stroke survivors.

Keywords: stroke, home care, rehabilitation, disability, medication management, wound care, nutrition, emotional support, patient safety.

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INTRODUCTION

The brain is the part of the central nervous system contained within the cranium, comprising the forebrain, midbrain and hindbrain. The brain is a mass of soft, spongy, pinkish gray nerve tissue that weighs about 1.2 kg in a human being. It is connected at its base with the spinal cord, which is also the part of the central nervous system [Brain. Medical dictionary 2019].

The brain controls thoughts, memory, speech and movement. It regulates and function of many organs. When the brain is healthy it works quickly and automatically. However, when problems occur, the results can be devastating. Inflammation in the brain can lead to problems such as vision loss, weakness and paralysis. Loss of brain cells, which happens when a person suffers from stroke.

The word „stroke“ is related to the Greek word “apoplexia” which implies being struck with a deadly blow. According to American Stroke Association stroke is the fifth leading cause of death and a leading cause of disability in the United States [Schuutta HS and Howe HM, 2006].

Stroke is an important and enormous public health problem in the world. Every year, nearly 15 million people experience a stroke attack throughout the world and 1.1 million people *per year* die due to stroke in Europe. Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the world. It is the second cause of death in Europe and the fourth cause of death in the USA and England. In Turkey, it is the second cause of death with 15% frequency (Yardim N et al 2007).

The mortality rate of stroke has been determined as 159 out of 100000 men and 181 out of 100000 women. Stroke mortality rate is higher in all age groups between 35 and 74, with some male predominance. On the other hand, compared to men, it is higher in women aged ≥ 75 (Dinç G et al 2008).

It has been reported that 21%-74% of post-stroke patients die in the acute phase of the disease, 15%-25% of patients die in the first year of the disease, and 5%-14% suffer new stroke episode in the same year (Stineman MG et al 2001).

Besides this, 40% of stroke patients are moderately disabled and 15%-30% are severely disabled when discharged from the hospital (Eyigör S 2007).

It is estimated that 25%-50% of post-stroke patients become partially or totally dependent on the others in daily activities (Fadıloğlu Ç, 2004; White CL et al 2004).

Home care for stroke patients involves a multidisciplinary approach to help them recover and adapt to any disabilities. Here are some key aspects:

1. Rehabilitation exercises: Encourage exercises to improve mobility, strength, and coordination. Rehabilitation exercises are a crucial part of home care for stroke patients, helping them regain mobility, strength, and coordination. These exercises can include range-of-motion exercises to maintain flexibility and prevent stiffness, strengthening exercises to improve muscle power, balance and coordination exercises to reduce fall risk, and functional activities to enhance daily living skills. A physiotherapist can tailor exercises to the patient's specific needs and abilities. Regular practice and encouragement are key to maximizing recovery. Exercises should be done under the guidance of a healthcare professional to ensure safety and effectiveness.

2. Medication management: Ensure timely medication and monitor for side effects. Effective medication management is crucial for stroke patients at home, ensuring they take their medications correctly and safely. This involves creating a medication schedule, understanding dosage instructions, and monitoring for potential side effects. Caregivers can help patients adhere to their medication regimen, manage potential interactions, and identify signs of adverse reactions. Medications may include anticoagulants, antihypertensives, and statins, which require regular monitoring and adjustments. A healthcare provider or pharmacist can offer guidance on medication management, and pill boxes or reminders can help with adherence (Saxena et al., 2024). By managing medications effectively, caregivers can help prevent complications and improve patient outcomes.

3. Wound care: Prevent pressure sores and manage any wounds. Wound care is a crucial aspect of home care for stroke patients, as they are at risk of developing pressure sores and other skin injuries due to limited mobility. Effective wound care involves regularly inspecting the skin, keeping it clean and dry, and using pressure-reducing devices such as cushions or mattresses. Caregivers should also be aware of signs of wound infection, such as redness, swelling, or increased pain, and seek medical attention if these symptoms occur. A healthcare professional can provide guidance on wound care techniques and products, such as dressings and topical



treatments (Nair & Jose, 2023). By prioritizing wound care, caregivers can help prevent complications and promote healing, improving the patient's overall quality of life.

4. Nutrition and hydration: Provide a balanced diet and adequate fluids. Adequate nutrition and hydration are essential for stroke patients' recovery and overall health. A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can help manage risk factors like hypertension and diabetes. Caregivers should ensure patients receive regular, nutritious meals and snacks, and encourage adequate fluid intake to prevent dehydration. Swallowing difficulties are common post-stroke, so food textures and feeding strategies may need adjustment. A speech therapist or dietitian can provide personalized guidance (Ghosh & Bhattacharya, 2022). Proper nutrition and hydration support healing, prevent complications, and improve overall quality of life.

5. Communication support: Help with speech therapy and communication. Communication support is vital for stroke patients, as many experience aphasia or speech difficulties post-stroke. Caregivers can facilitate communication by speaking clearly, using simple language, and allowing patients time to respond. Non-verbal cues like gestures and facial expressions can also aid understanding. Speech therapists can provide strategies and tools, such as picture boards or apps, to enhance communication (Kaur & Singh, 2021). Emotional support and patience are key, as communication challenges can be frustrating for patients. By adapting communication approaches, caregivers can help patients express needs, emotions, and participate in decision-making, improving their overall well-being.

6. Emotional support: Offer emotional support and counselling. Emotional support is a crucial aspect of home care for stroke patients, as they often experience anxiety, depression, and frustration due to their changed circumstances. Caregivers can provide emotional support by listening attentively, validating their feelings, and encouraging participation in enjoyable activities. Support groups, counselling, or therapy can also help patients cope with emotional challenges (Das & Das, 2020). By fostering a positive and supportive environment, caregivers can help patients adjust to their new reality, build confidence, and improve their mental well-being. Emotional support can also help reduce caregiver stress and burnout.

7. Safety precautions: Safety precautions are essential in home care for stroke patients to prevent falls, injuries, and other accidents. Caregivers can create a safe environment by removing tripping hazards, installing handrails, and ensuring adequate lighting. Patients should be encouraged to use assistive devices like walkers or canes, and footwear with non-slip soles. Medications should be stored safely, and emergency contact numbers kept handy (Gupta & Kumar, 2019). Regular checks on the patient's condition, medication adherence, and home environment can also help prevent complications. By prioritizing safety, caregivers can reduce risks, promote independence, and improve the patient's quality of life.

CONCLUSION

Stroke is a serious neurological condition that significantly affects an individual's physical, psychological, and social well-being. It is one of the leading causes of death and disability worldwide, making it a major public health concern. The condition can result in long-term complications such as paralysis, weakness, communication difficulties, and dependence on others for daily activities. Therefore, proper management and continuous care are essential to improve the quality of life of stroke survivors.

Home care plays a vital role in the recovery and rehabilitation of stroke patients. A comprehensive approach that includes rehabilitation exercises, proper medication management, wound care, adequate nutrition and hydration, communication support, emotional support, and safety precautions can greatly enhance recovery outcomes. With the involvement of healthcare professionals and supportive caregivers, stroke patients can regain independence, prevent complications, and achieve better physical and emotional well-being.



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