Occupational therapy in community dwelling frail elderly

Haio: VERBURGH Corneel , KUL
Promotor: AERTGEERTS Bert , KUL
Praktijkopleider: Fonteyn Olivier

Context: Problem: It is recommended good practice for a general practitioner to refer community-dwelling frail older people to home-based occupational therapy. The implementation of this referral often lacks. In this master thesis, we will implement this recommendation in our own general practice (Medisch Centrum Rotselaar).

Onderzoeksvraag: Aim: (1) To investigate the improvement of our frail older patients after referral for home-based occupational therapy (OT) and (2) how this referral implementation can be improved in our practice.

Methode: Methods: A pre- and post-test study design was used. Initially, ten (n=10) community-dwelling frail older people (74 years old) in our practice were assessed for any functional deficit and self-perceived loss of functional ability. Cognitive function was also tested. They were referred for an environmental audit by an OT. After the intervention, they were reassessed for the functional deficit and cognitive function. Retrospectively, the chronic care model was used to highlight the different aspects of this implementation.

Resultaten: Results: Eight of the ten included participants were referred. One referred participant was lost to follow up by death. The mean follow-up of the remaining seven participants was 115 days. Only one participant of eight had made (and planned) some of the recommended modifications. The reassessments at follow-up showed no improvement in functional ability. Discussion: Suspected loss of functional or cognitive ability can be objectified by the GP with assessment tools. Adherence to the home modification advice was very low and consequently, no functional improvement has been found. Decision support and integration of all CCM elements seem to remain the most lacking implementational components.

Conclusie: Conclusion: Decision support and integration of the different implementation components were indicated as the two most important remaining targets for improvement at the end of this single GP practice improvement project. A clear guideline on crucial OT referral elements and consequent physician education might facilitate the integration of OT for community-dwelling frail older people into a GP practice.