Understanding the participation of an adolescent with acquired brain injury (ABI) in cognitive rehabilitation: A case study

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Abstract

As advances in medicine and technology have improved, the amounts of adolescents who are surviving with an ABI are increasing. Hence the need to address the cognitive impairments related to this population has also increased. Whilst the literature supports cognitive rehabilitation and its use with adults with ABI, there is little information that provides support for its use with adolescents. Thus, this study aims contribute to this area by investigating the lived experience of an adolescent with ABI, and, in particular, their motivation to remain engaged in cognitive rehabilitation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two people; an adolescent named ‘Holly’, who has both an ABI and a history of participation in cognitive rehabilitation, and her father Robert, who was able to provide an additional perspective on her experience. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed qualitatively using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Analysis of the findings revealed the significant social and emotional impacts that Holly has experienced due to her ABI, which has lead to distorted perceptions of self, feelings of unacceptance by her peers and an intrinsic desire to live a ‘normal’ life. Interpretation of these findings suggests that Holly is motivated to participate in rehabilitation, because it offers her opportunities for success in personally meaningful goals and thus providing visions of possibility of achieving future long term outcomes. The results from this study suggest that an adolescent will remain engaged in cognitive rehabilitation, if it is meaningful to the individual involved, and allows the person to experience success and strive for future aspirations.