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Stroke survey reveals gaps in provision

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Physio is key for stroke patients but a survey reveals gaps in provision. Graham Clews looks at patients' experiences

Physiotherapy is key in the successful treatment of many stroke patients once they have left hospital.

But a survey by the CSP and Stroke Association found that three quarters of physios said they were not able to deliver the best outcome for stroke patients, and one fifth of stroke survivors said they needed post-hospital physiotherapy, but received none from the NHS.

The two organisations have now combined to produce a report, *Moving on*, setting out the importance of access to physiotherapy for stroke survivors once they are discharged from hospital, and highlighting the experiences of some stroke survivors.

Robert Veasey, 57, from Boston, Lincolnshire, had two strokes in a year – a minor one followed by a more serious one that left him with paralysis on his left side and an inability to walk.

He says he did see a student physio while he was in hospital, but on discharge he was given no information about physiotherapy, and apart from one phone call he says he has received no further help from the NHS with his coordination and balance.

'All the physical improvements that I have made have been down to me and the support of my wife,' he says. 'They never fully understood that my arthritis dates back to before the stroke, and maybe this affected the decision on whether I could have physiotherapy. Unfortunately, I don't think I will ever know.'

Maureen Bailey, who is 73 and from Northamptonshire, was an active mother, grandmother and great grandmother until a stroke left her with very little mobility. 'There was not much communication with a physiotherapist while I was in hospital and I can't remember being given an assessment for any physio once I left hospital,' she says. 'I just felt that my husband and myself were left on our own. We felt isolated.'

When Maureen was discharged she received six weeks of morning care, but this did not help with mobility. Around three months after leaving hospital, she says she was given a physiotherapy referral 'completely out of the blue', through her GP.

'My mobility is gradually improving but it makes me feel that if I had received the physiotherapy sooner, my mobility would be a lot better now,' she says.

Bob Yexley, from Dorset, was still working as a handyman, aged 66, to keep himself active, when he had a stroke on Boxing Day just over two years ago.

He says he received some physio in hospital, but sessions were often cancelled and there was nothing at weekends. He was offered physiotherapy after being discharged and he says the weekly half-hour sessions helped with both his pain and his walking.

'Then after four weeks I was told that I would not be able to have any more physiotherapy,' he says. 'The only reason given was that there was a lack of resources to give any more. I'm certain that with more physiotherapy I could now be walking much better.'

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