

Abstract

Reflection on patients' needs is a necessary part of the assessment of quality of services. An interpretive phenomenological study aimed to add to the existing knowledge base about the phenomenon patients' needs in rehabilitation, the patients' side was explored, which is, unfortunately, a rare perspective in rehabilitation literature.

The sample was purposively selected and consisted of twelve individuals aged 26-85 years -seven men, five women - who had experienced rehabilitation therapy at one of three main rehabilitation clinics in Iceland. The participants were seen as co-researchers and their medical diagnoses were heart disease, paralysis, arthritis, chronic lung disease, stroke, chronic fatigue, psychological problems and pain. Six co-researchers had been referred to rehabilitation following an acute event and six because of a chronic state. The study was conducted in accordance with The Vancouver School of Doing Phenomenology and each co-researcher was interviewed one to three times. The end result was sixteen in-depth interviews that were analyzed thematically and interpreted.

Six main needs were identified in the co-researchers' accounts. Firstly, the co-researchers *needed to be able to cope* with the impact of their acute or chronic problems. They felt that their ability to cope was strongly tied to their own personal traits, their earlier experience and preconceptions, knowing the source of their suffering, and to experience a balance between sleep, rest and activity while in rehabilitation. Secondly, they *needed to adapt to a new self* since their accident or illness usually meant adapting to new characteristics of self. They needed, however, in the middle of these existential changes to be able to sustain a personal role and needed faith, hope and optimism to succeed. Thirdly, they *needed individualized caring*, where they needed to be 'I' and not just 'the patient', they needed to be listened to and heard in a caring relationship where

their need for privacy, when needed, was respected. Fourthly, they *needed emotional support* from family, peers and staff. Furthermore, they *needed a sense of security* in a stable and homelike environment with available assistance, help and presence. Finally, the co-researchers needed *a goal -oriented and progressive care*, where realistic and achievable goals were established, where patient education enhanced their independency and they were empowered into a new lifestyle.

No generalizations will be drawn from the results, as each co-researcher's experience is unique. However, phenomenological studies can affect services by facilitating understanding and reflection on the subject.