Comparing Programs to Support Stroke Survivors and Their Caregivers during the Transition Home from the Hospital or a Rehabilitation Facility -- The MISTT Study

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What was the research about?
After a stroke, it can be hard for patients to manage their health and health care when they return home from the hospital or a rehabilitation, or rehab, facility. Emotional, social, and health problems can slow recovery and increase the chance that a patient must go back to the hospital. These problems can also increase stress for caregivers. Support from social workers during this time may help.

In this study, the research team compared three types of support to help patients and their caregivers transition home after a stroke:

- Support from a social worker
- Support from a social worker plus access to a stroke education website
- Usual care consisting of access to standard services, such as stroke education and referrals

What were the results?
Patients who received social worker support plus website access

- Felt more confident to manage and improve their health than patients who only received social worker support

The three types of support didn't differ in

- Patients' quality of life related to mental health and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- How likely patients were to have unplanned hospital trips or another stroke
- The number of days at home, defined as days not spent in a medical facility
- Caregiver reports of life changes, depression symptoms, social support, or number of unhealthy days

Who was in the study?
The study included 265 patients who'd had a stroke and 169 of their caregivers. Patients received care at three hospitals in Michigan. They either went directly home from the hospital or went to a rehab facility first and then went home within four weeks. Of the patients, 79 percent were white, 17 percent were black, 3 percent were other races, and 1 percent were more than one race. Also, 2 percent were Hispanic, and 11 percent didn't report their ethnicity. The average age was 66, and 51 percent were men.
Of the caregivers, 81 percent were white, 11 percent were black, 5 percent were more than one race, and 3 percent were other races. Also, 10 percent were Hispanic, and 9 percent didn't report ethnicity. The average age was 58, and 77 percent were women.

**What did the research team do?**
The research team assigned patients by chance to one of three groups. In the first group, social workers visited patients at home and made a plan to address unmet health and other needs. Social workers called patients weekly for the next eight weeks and made another home visit after four weeks. In the second group, patients had the same social worker support and also had access to a website with education and resources for stroke survivors. In the third group, patients received usual care.

Patients and caregivers responded to telephone surveys 7 and 90 days after the patient went home.

Stroke survivors, caregivers, and healthcare professionals gave input on the study.

**What were the limits of the study?**
Most patients in the study were white. Results may differ for patients of different races. Most of the patients in the study had mild strokes; results may differ for patients with more severe strokes.

Future research could see whether results differ for patient of other backgrounds.

**How can people use the results?**
Hospitals can use the results of this study when considering how to help patients and their caregivers return home from the hospital after a stroke.

*To learn more about this project, visit* [www.pcori.org/Reeves220](http://www.pcori.org/Reeves220).