Unravelling perceived fatigue and activity pacing in maintaining a physically active lifestyle following discharge from rehabilitation in stroke patients.

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INTRODUCTION & AIMS

Background:
Fatigue is a common and distressing symptom that is reported in stroke patients following discharge from rehabilitation, hampering a sustainable physically active lifestyle and being one of the strongest predictors of daily functional disability [1,2].

The aims of this study were:
• To identify perceived fatigue trajectories in stroke patients after rehabilitation.
• To determine which factors are associated with trajectory membership of perceived fatigue before discharge from rehabilitation.
• To gather insight in how perceived fatigue and activity pacing relate to maintaining a physically active lifestyle after rehabilitation.

DESIGN & METHODS

Design:
Stroke patients (N=303) were followed from baseline (T0: 3-6 weeks before discharge) to 14 (T1), 33 (T2) and 52 (T3) weeks after discharge from rehabilitation in the longitudinal cohort study Rehabilitation, Sports and Active lifestyle (ReSpAct).

Statistical analyses:
• Latent Class analysis was conducted to determine perceived fatigue trajectories (T1 to T3) based on the Fatigue Severity Scale (FSS).
• Binomial multivariable logistic regression analyses were performed to determine personal and health-related factors and behaviours of activity pacing associated with trajectory membership at T0.
• Multilevel analyses were used to investigate how self-reported physical activity levels (assessed with the Adapted-SQUASH questionnaire) were related to perceived fatigue and activity pacing (T1 to T3).

RESULTS

Figure 1: Three perceived fatigue trajectories in stroke patients (N=206), with the continuous lines determined with Latent Class analysis (T1 to T3) and dashed lines determined with descriptive statistics (T0).

Figure 2: Standardized values of physical activity in stroke patients (N=200) with low (N=33) and high (N=167) perceived fatigue, and with high or low awareness of their engagement in activity pacing.

CONCLUSIONS

• We identified three fatigue trajectories in stroke patients after rehabilitation: high, low, and recovery.
• Low education level, low quality of life and high awareness of activity pacing before discharge identified stroke patients in the high fatigue trajectory.
• Lower levels of physical activity were related to high perceived fatigue and high awareness of activity pacing.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE
The findings of this study highlight the need to focus more on the potential of activity pacing in today’s rehabilitation practice.