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People with neurological impairments face the aftermath of life-long challenges which has lingering effects on their self-image that may result in isolation from the community. An integrated community rehabilitation programme founded on the principles of CE was being implemented in a community-based day rehabilitation centre with the inclusion of caregiver(s) or family members in the rehabilitation team together with allied health, nursing and welfare professionals.

A pilot self-support group (SSG) emphasizing self-reliance and eradication of learned helplessness was organised for 10 clients who suffered from Cerebrovascular Accident (CVA) for 6 – 18 months. The comprehensive programme targeted at cultivating physical exercising habit, facilitating emotional control, experiencing peers support, promoting community participation as well as establishing healthy life style for prevention of recurrent stroke. Group interviews were conducted to collect feedback from clients and their caregivers after 4 month's SSG.

During the programme, clients claimed that they were more engaged to physical activities with verbalised movement and were more capable of experiencing fun and success in a group format. Their compliance of self-administered exercises at home was good. Increased confidence in taking care of themselves and in leaving their own home was reported. Most clients perceived themselves positively and accepted their own post-morbid limitations. Caregivers commented that more stable emotion was found that had greatly reduced their caring burden. Both the clients and their caregivers had acquired the basic skills for community participation with better understanding of available community resources that are relevant to them. The philosophy of CE helps to align a multidisciplinary staff team with a holistic mindset for establishing a structured programme that facilitates clients to gradually process internal changes with continuing reinforcement from peers, staff and family members. It was a crucial stepping stone for people with neurological impairments to develop a sustainable coping will to combat the aftermath of their life-long challenges. Last but not least, client's and their caregivers' active involvement together with mutual support from peers and staff are the key to a successful outcome.



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