



UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Do people with multiple sclerosis (MS) and health professionals share perceptions on exercise delivery and support? A qualitative study.

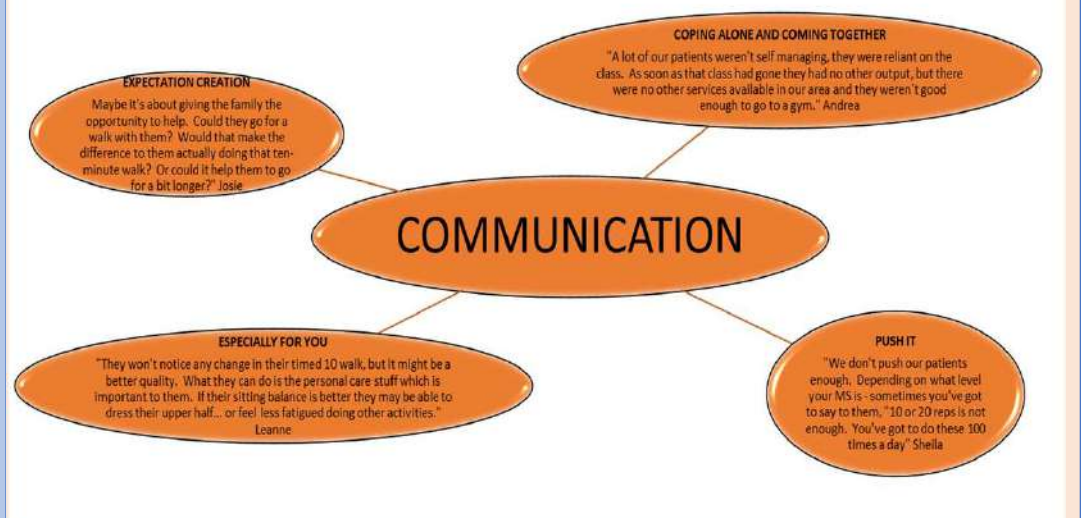
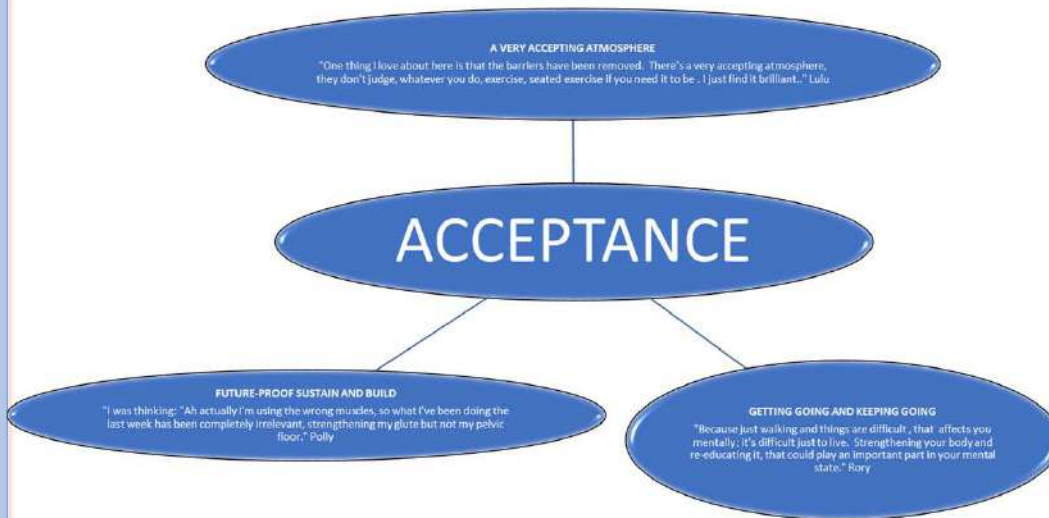
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Background: Exercise has been shown to have many health benefits for people with MS including improved cardiorespiratory fitness, and muscle strength (Platta et al. 2016, Jorgensen et al 2017), fatigue (Langesov-Christensen et al 2021), walking speed and endurance (Pearson et al 2015). Exercise has also been beneficial for depressive symptoms (Dalgas et al 2019) and quality of life in MS (Motl et al 2017). Importantly, these benefits are achieved without increasing the risk for relapse (Pilutti, Platta et al. 2014). Unfortunately exercise programmes are often poorly attended with a high dropout rate (Mayo et al 2020). This study aimed to seek the views of people with MS and health professionals on barriers and facilitators to exercise, and provide recommendations for the delivery and support of exercise for people with MS.

People with MS: n=17, 6 males, 11 females, mean age 59.6 (9.4), disease duration 17.9 (13.0) and Patient Determined Disease Steps 5 (2.0) – support needed to walk 25m.

Health professionals: n=18, 14 female, 4 male, 10 community physiotherapists, 3 physiotherapy students, 1 occupational therapist, 1 researcher, 1 exercise instructor, mean experience working with MS 12.0 (9.7) years.



Common findings: A strong therapeutic relationship between professional and person with MS is important. There is a need for more individualised support for exercise including knowledge and application of behaviour change techniques e.g. structured patient-led goal setting and assistance with action planning and coping planning. This could be underpinned by education for health professionals on these topics. The development of family and peer support networks could also be promoted by those supervising exercise programmes.