Weight-Bearing Interventions to Decrease Spasticity and Improve Gait in Stroke Patients: A Case Report

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Introduction

- Stroke, also known as cerebrovascular accident (CVA), is an interruption of blood supply to the brain, either by blockage of arteries (ischemic stroke) or bursting of vessels (hemorrhagic stroke), preventing brain tissues from receiving oxygen.
- According to the Central Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), stroke is the 5th leading cause of death in the United States.
- While stroke affects multiple systems in the body, it can cause spasticity in muscles of the body affecting a person’s ability to walk in a coordinated manner. Spasticity is an abnormal increase in tone of the muscles that can interfere with rehabilitation in those who have experienced a stroke.²

Purpose

The purpose of this case report is to determine the success of weight-bearing interventions on spasticity reduction and improved gait patterns for patients who are recovering from a chronic CVA.

Case Description

Patient Profile:
- The patient is a 61-year-old male who experienced a left hemorrhagic CVA in September 2017 causing right hemiparesis.
- Prior to his CVA, he was independent in all life aspects and was an active runner and golfer.
- He has received prior rehabilitation, including outpatient physical therapy and occupational therapy.

Body Structure and Function Limitations:
- Right upper and lower extremity spasticity
- Circumduction gait
- Weakness and decreased range of motion of right extremities

Activity Limitations:
- Inability to drive
- Decreased ability to negotiate stairs without holding on to the railing
- Decreased ability to ambulate safely

Participation Restrictions:
- Driving to therapy sessions
- Going for >1 mile walks around the neighborhood
- Playing golf
- Reaching behind during bathing
- Preparing his own lunch.

Examination Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measure</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TUG (fall risk ≥15 seconds)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUG time (with quad cane): 48.2 sec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUG time (without quad cane): 1 min 23 sec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUG time (with AFO and quad cane): 43.2 sec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUG time (with ACE wrap and quad cane): 58.5 sec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5x Sit to Stand (fall risk ≤11.4): 23.3 sec

Plan of Care

- Frequency and Duration: 1 time/week for 4 weeks
- Interventions:
  - Stretching: Standing calf stretches
  - Strengthening: Seated toe raises
  - Weight-Bearing: Pre-Gait Sequence
  - Gait Training: Obstacle course
- Patient Education: Utilizing UE to prevent further muscle atrophy and tightness
- Progression Criteria:
  - Based on patient’s functional status
  - Exercises were progressed through the pre-gait sequence, obstacle courses with objects to step over and ambulating various distances.

Discussion and Conclusion

- For a patient with chronic CVA, weight-bearing interventions are effective in reducing spasticity, increasing ROM, and improving gait patterns.
- Application of weight-bearing through the paretic limb has demonstrated improvements in this patient’s TUG and 5xSTS score.

Clinical Relevance

- In addition to stretching and strengthening, weight-bearing interventions should be incorporated into intervention plans for patients who are recovering from a CVA.
- Interventions should be task-oriented to show the best improvements with activity limitations and participation restrictions in patients recovering from a CVA.

References


Acknowledgment

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