

## **“From a Focus on Function to Rediscovering the Self: A Case Report of an Individual with Post-Stroke Depression”**

This article highlighted the specific observations from each music therapy session for Mr. S and that is important for a Rec therapist to see his progression. It also showed how the therapists shifted their focus from functional skills to how Mr. S saw himself, which is what led to his positive outcomes. This article is specific to one individual and has not been tested on other patients, so the reliability isn't very strong. The study of this article should be repeated to other patients and see if there really is a correlation between rediscovering self and the rehabilitation of post-stroke patients.

Article Critique 2

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Did you know that 2.6% of Americans (roughly six million US citizens) report having experienced a stroke in their lives (Montgomery, Booth, & Hutchinson, 2009)? This staggering statistic obligates us to consider the best ways to treat and help post-stroke patients. When most of us think of rehabilitation for patients who have experienced a stroke, the primary that we believe is needed is physical therapy, to increase physiological functioning. However, the devastating after-effects of a stroke also impact the mental functioning of individuals. “The most common psychological responses post-stroke include fatigue, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance, and increased emotional liability” (Montgomery, Booth, & Hutchinson, 2009, p. 26). Such aftermath requires much more than simple physiological rehabilitation efforts. As a society, particularly as recreational therapists, we must learn to help stroke patients recover and regain the emotional, intellectual, and social ground they lost when they experienced a stroke.

### **Brief Summary of the Article**

The article “From a Focus on Function to Rediscovering the Self: A Case Report of an Individual with Post-Stroke Depression” by Montgomery, Booth, & Hutchinson (2009) delves into the case of Mr. S, a forty-year-old man with post-stroke depression. After his stroke, his limitations were widespread; he was unable walk, to use his left hand or arm, and had difficulty in higher level thinking activities. Initially, the therapists focused on improving his functional capabilities, but then realized that a more effective treatment would be helping the man rediscover his identity through reconnecting with the things that he loved to do, mainly music. The process was far from smooth and the cohort of therapists first thought that helping the man to rediscover his previously acquired skill playing the bass would improve his psychological state of being. This approach utterly failed, undermining Mr. S’s confidence and perceived self-

efficacy, only furthering his depression. Yet, revising their plan, the therapists decided to introduce him to a new form of musical performance, the bongos, and the effects were dramatically different. After a six week plan utilizing music therapy, Mr. S exhibited “independent ambulation and some functional use of his left arm and hand,” improved cognitive processing, and expressing a renewed outlook on life including desires and dreams for his own future (Montgomery, Booth, & Hutchinson, 2009, p. 28).

### **Strengths of the Article**

One of the greatest strengths of this article is that it highlights observations noted directly after each of the six music therapy sessions, providing the reader with a greater opportunity to draw his or her own conclusion regarding Mr. S’s progression. For example, simply noting that this forty-year-old man, before treatment, had physical and cognitive difficulties is fairly standard. Reading the therapist’s notes delineating how he struggled to put in batteries into a radio for twenty minutes with no success and no desire for help, gives the reader a much clearer impression of the severity of Mr. S’s disorder.

Additionally, it is commendable that the authors were not afraid to discuss their own failed attempts in this specific case study. These humble therapists recognized that they experienced an essential “shift from a focus on functional skills to address issues associated with how Mr. S. came to see himself” (Montgomery, Booth, & Hutchinson, 2009, p. 30). It is encouraging for all of us who are striving to become good therapists to recognize that even trained professionals make mistakes and are still learning the best way to treat each individual.

### **Weaknesses of the Article**

One weakness that I saw in this article is simply that it is an individualized study and, as case study are prone to do, it subtly suggests that the principles and practices that worked for this man will apply generally to all patients with post-stroke depression. Furthermore, I struggled with the therapists often referring to the patient “Rediscovering...a valued sense of self,” implying that the concept of one’s self and value is based on the performance of a form of recreation, in this case, the mastery of music (Montgomery, Booth, & Hutchinson, 2009, p. 37), There are so many more nuances involved with defining and discovering one’s true self than simply remembering how to produce music.

### **Applicability of the Article**

Several principles struck me as extremely relevant in a therapeutic recreation setting. One was the apparent frustration and apathy that the patient developed when the therapist *assigned* him to practice, and left him feeling a lack of autonomy. Choice and perceived autonomy are essential aspects in recreational therapy. Also, the principle of generalizability was apparent in this case study; once the man succeeded in playing a new instrument his “success with music left him open to consider other opportunities” and he “talked less about what was missing in his life and more about what he was doing presently” (Montgomery, Booth, & Hutchinson, 2009, p. 34). There is an overwhelming sense of progression as he experiences success in one aspect of his life, and this optimism spreads to affect how he thinks about his future ambitions and aspirations.

### **My Personal Reaction and Interests**

I love the basis of this article—that discovering *self* should be the focus of rehabilitation and treatment programs, rather than the simpler objectives of helping people establish a

relatively normal functional quality of life. To me, it is akin to a McMurphy vs. Nurse Ratched's approach to therapy. It is the higher goal of recreational therapy to increase self-efficacy and not merely physical quality of life.

### **Conclusion**

Certainly the needs of those who have suffered strokes differ according to each individual. However, it is important to recognize how these individuals have been affected psychologically and how we as recreational therapists can aid in their emotional, physical, and cognitive recovery. Achieving a sense of autonomy and competence through music therapy is one identified route that aided one man with post-stroke depression to find himself and progress on the road to recovery.

## References

Montgomery, E., Booth, R., and Hutchinson, S. (2009). From a focus on function to rediscovering the self: A case report of an individual with post-stroke depression. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 43 (4). Retrieved January 29, 2015, from <http://js.sagamorepub.com/trj/article/view/901>

