

The Importance of Functioning and Disability Status Follow-Up in People with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract : Background: The diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (MS) is a major life challenge and has repercussions on all aspects of the daily functioning of those attained by it - personal activities, social participation, and quality of life. Regular follow-up of only the neurological status is not informative enough so that it could provide data on the sort of support and rehabilitation that is required. Objective: The aim of this study was to establish the current level of functioning of persons attained by MS and the factors that influence it. Methods: The study was conducted in Serbia, on a sample of 108 persons with relapse-remitting form of MS, aged 20 to 53 (mean 39.86 years; SD 8.20 years). All participants were fully ambulatory. Methods applied in the study include Expanded Disability Status Scale-EDSS and World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule, WHODAS 2.0 (36-item version, self-administered). Results: Participants were found to experience the most problems in the domains of Participation, Mobility, Life activities and Cognition. The least difficulties were found in the domain of Self-care. Symptom duration was the only control variable with a significant partial contribution to the prediction of the WHODAS scale score ($\beta=0.30$, $p < 0.05$). The total EDSS score correlated with the total WHODAS 2.0 score ($r=0.34$, $p=0.00$). Statistically significant differences in the domain of EDSS 0-5.5 were found within categories (0-1.5; 2-3.5; 4-5.5). The more pronounced a participant's EDSS score was, although not indicative of large changes in the neurological status, the more apparent the changes in the functional domain, i.e. in all areas covered by WHODAS 2.0. Pyramidal ($\beta=0.34$, $p < 0.05$) and Bowel and bladder ($\beta=0.24$, $p < 0.05$) functional systems were found to have a significant partial contribution to the prediction of the WHODAS score. Conclusion: Measuring functioning and disability is important in the follow-up of persons suffering from MS in order to plan rehabilitation and define areas in which additional support is needed.

Keywords : disability, functionality, multiple sclerosis, rehabilitation

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