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International Cooperation in Rehabilitation: A Volunteer Experience in Supporting Patients and Staff in Uzbekistan

Topic: Community Based Rehabilitation

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BACKGROUND

This report examines the activities of a Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) physiotherapist dispatched by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) at the National Rehabilitation and Prosthetics Center for Persons with Disabilities in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. This initiative aimed to promote patient self-management and provide technical support to local rehabilitation staff.

CASE DESCRIPTION

This initiative was conducted from November 2023 to June 2025. The center primarily accommodates inpatients in the chronic phase of stroke and spinal cord injury, with an approximate hospitalization period of 10 days. The main objectives were the creation of patient support tools and the enhancement of the clinical skills of local rehabilitation staff. As part of patient support, self-exercise materials were created based on the needs of patients and local staff. These materials were incorporated into daily rehabilitation sessions, where patients and their families received tailored instructions. In addition, disease-specific leaflets were produced, distributed within the hospital, and shared via social media platforms to enhance health literacy. Furthermore, as part of staff support, assistance was provided during rehabilitation sessions. However, due to personnel shortages, securing sufficient time for direct training was challenging. To address this, training workshops were conducted using case studies to reinforce movement analysis and treatment techniques, ensuring their practical application in clinical settings.

DISCUSSION

In Uzbekistan, family members commonly accompany patients during hospitalization. Although the length of stay is short, this setting provided ample opportunities to support both patients and caregivers. The patient support tools created as part of this initiative contributed to improved self-management and alleviated family members' concerns about caregiving. Additionally, training workshops enhanced clinical reasoning and strengthened the practical skills of local staff. This initiative provided an opportunity for a deeper understanding of on-site needs and challenges through immersion in the local culture and engagement with the community. Furthermore, it fostered mutual understanding, potentially contributing to problem-solving from a global perspective. Future initiatives will expand patient support tools and improve their practical application through interprofessional collaboration. Additionally, local staff-led training workshops and patient consultation sessions will be implemented to enhance healthcare access and strengthen rehabilitation services.

CONCLUSION

Interventions tailored to local healthcare conditions and cultural background strengthened patient and family self-management and enhanced local staff's clinical skills. Strengthening interprofessional collaboration and rehabilitation systems is expected to improve rehabilitation quality, expand healthcare access, and support Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

Statement of Disclosures

None

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