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The HOME Project: Understanding best practice for occupational therapy pre-discharge home visits.

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Background The transition from hospital to home is fraught with challenges, fear of failure and risk of losing independence. The home visit is assumed to make this transition safer and more effective. This seems reasonable as risks can be identified in the context of a home visit. Yet there is currently little to no research evidence and no established guidelines for what should be addressed or what interventions need to be carried out during the visit.

Purpose: The aim was to refine and test a best practice pre-discharge home visit intervention (HOME) for successful transitioning home and better outcomes in terms of functional independence, participation and resumption of usual life activities.

Methods: The HOME protocol draws on research evidence from a systematic review, survey of NSW hospitals and pilot study results from a feasibility randomized controlled trial (n=10). The protocol uses validated assessment processes, outlines the conceptual underpinning of home visiting including goal theory, concepts of self efficacy and participation, and uses results from both focus groups and a state-wide survey of clinicians to define the range of interventions and articulate the problem solving process.

Results: The HOME protocol and the results of the feasibility trial will be presented. Outcome measures include the NEADL and modified RNL Index. The small feasibility trial (n=10) reported higher ADL performance at 2 months (p=.003) suggestive of benefits of home visiting, however survey results indicated great variability across NSW in home visiting practices from acute care and that some hospitals no longer provide this intervention at all.

Conclusion: The HOME protocol provides a best-practice approach to home visits, and feasibility data suggest that it is safe and acceptable to administer.

Learning Outcomes: This paper will present the best available evidence about one of our profession's core interventions, an occupational therapy pre-discharge home visit.