

Psychological Management

To overcome the combination of denial and personal history of successful coping that is often found in polio survivors, an interdisciplinary approach to psychological problems is helpful. Each member of the team brings with them specific skills and knowledge that could assist the patient address some of the issues that have resulted from the new symptoms that the patient is experiencing.

The main aims of treatment of the post-polio patient should be to:

- Increase and expand the patient's personal and external resources;
- Provide education and support; and
- Reinforce the need for the patient to have control over their lives.

Several strategies have been successfully utilised by clinicians to assist patients enhance their coping skills. These strategies have included:

- Assisting the patient in identifying their current and previous coping strategies.
- Encouraging the patient to make necessary lifestyle changes including relaxation, stress management, energy conservation and work simplification.
- Encouraging the patient to focus on past achievements and identify personal strengths rather than focusing on the new weaknesses.
- Encouraging the patient to keep the lines of communication open through:
 - Sharing literature
 - Talking with others; and
 - Attending workshops and relevant information sessions (when available)

This can be achieved through referring the patient to a local post-polio support group and by providing the patient with adequate information and resources.

- Encouraging the patient to be an active participant in managing their own needs through:
 - Setting limits
 - Reminding others of their needs; and
 - Seeking support and information.
- Encouraging the patient to be aware of their own feelings and the feelings of others (including family members) by:
 - Showing appreciation for the contribution of others; and
 - Seeking help before difficulties evolve.
- Encouraging the patient to recognise their feelings of loss and grief and provide support to them and their families through this process.
- Referring to other health professionals, including psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers, to address unresolved issues.