

Title: Impact of the Social Environment on Occupational Experience and Performance Among Persons with Unilateral Neglect

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Major Finding: Rehabilitation professionals and relatives used a sequence of strategies to help women understand and manage their unilateral neglect.

Participants:

- 4 females
- Age: 58-76
- Diagnostic condition: Right cerebral vascular accident with left hemiparesis and unilateral neglect
- Setting: Inpatient neurological rehabilitation clinic in Sweden

Method: Participants were interviewed 5-7 times over 16 weeks of their rehabilitation about their experiences of everyday occupations and how others' actions affected them. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis. Participants were also observed during their daily occupations and field notes were written after each interview and observation.

Analysis: Modified form of the Empirical, Phenomenological, Psychological (EPP) method. The psychological focus was replaced with a focus on daily occupational experiences.

Findings:

- Participants perceived that rehabilitation professionals and relatives demonstrated a sequence of strategies for dealing with and helping them perform despite their unilateral neglect.
- The strategies used by others reflected the changing experience of neglect over time and enabled the participants to reclaim and occupy the neglected half of the world.
- The participants learned to incorporate others as extensions of their bodies in order to compensate for their ongoing inability to directly experience the left half of the world.

Conclusion: It is important for others to understand a client's changing experience of neglect and to adjust their support and collaboration accordingly.

Implications for future research: Future research will need to refine and test the effectiveness of a phenomenological-based approach to intervention for persons with unilateral neglect using the kinds of

Evidence-based practice implications:

- **Occupational therapy intervention for persons with neglect could potentially become more effective by systematically incorporating the kinds of strategies identified in this study, such as permitting encounters with the left-world, creating significant and familiar situations, providing cues during performance, and collaborating to support occupation of the left-world.**
- **Therapists could consult with others to increase their understanding and effectiveness in interacting with persons who have unilateral neglect.**

Tham, K. & Kielhofner, G. (2003). Impact of the social environment on occupational experience and performance among persons with unilateral neglect. American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 57 (4), 403-412.

