

EARLY GUIDANCE PROGRAM FOR PATIENTS WITH MS (PwMS): A NOVEL APPROACH

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INTRODUCTION

Scientific research has shown that informing MS patients at the right moment can substantially improve the quality of life of patients and their families. That is why an early guidance program is developed, besides the MS reference team, as the second complementary care program in the National MS Center (NMSC) in Melsbroek, Belgium. The NMSC has, partly supported by the MS Leagues, built up similar experiences in the past with several educational projects. One of these consisted of the organization of an "MS school". The response of the involved patients and their families was so positive that a permanent early guidance program needed to be considered. The early guidance program was elaborated on the principles of health promotion by tailor-made education, advice and guidance based on the individual needs of the PwMS. It aims to prevent for complications on physical, emotional and participation levels due to disease evolution. The approach is executed by a multidisciplinary team of MS experts. A multidisciplinary assessment of different functions and impairments serves as the basis on which attention is paid to: medical aspects (symptomatic treatment), therapeutic aspects (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy), social integration (finances, accommodation, occupation, work, transport, devices, professional homecare), relational aspects (relationship counseling, sexual advice, children and MS), psychological and neuropsychological aspects (clinical counseling, exploring coping techniques).

	Thursday	Friday
Intake	By medical doctor	
	Afternoon 13h – 17h	Morning 8h30-12h30
Week 1	Multidisciplinary team meeting Social Service Physical therapy Clinical psychology	Physical therapy (2): Pelvic floor reeducation Neuropsychology Occupational therapy
Week 2	Speech therapy Social service Physical therapy (3): relaxation therapy	Clinical Psychology (2) Neuropsychology (2) Occupational therapy (2)
Week 3	Multidisciplinary team meeting Physical therapy (4): hydrotherapy Occupational therapy (3) Clinical psychology (3) Medical doctor	Physical therapy (5): pelvic floor reeducation Neuropsychology [3] Occupational therapy [4]

PATIENTS

All patients (Flemish and French speaking) that took part in the early guidance program during the 2 measurement periods:

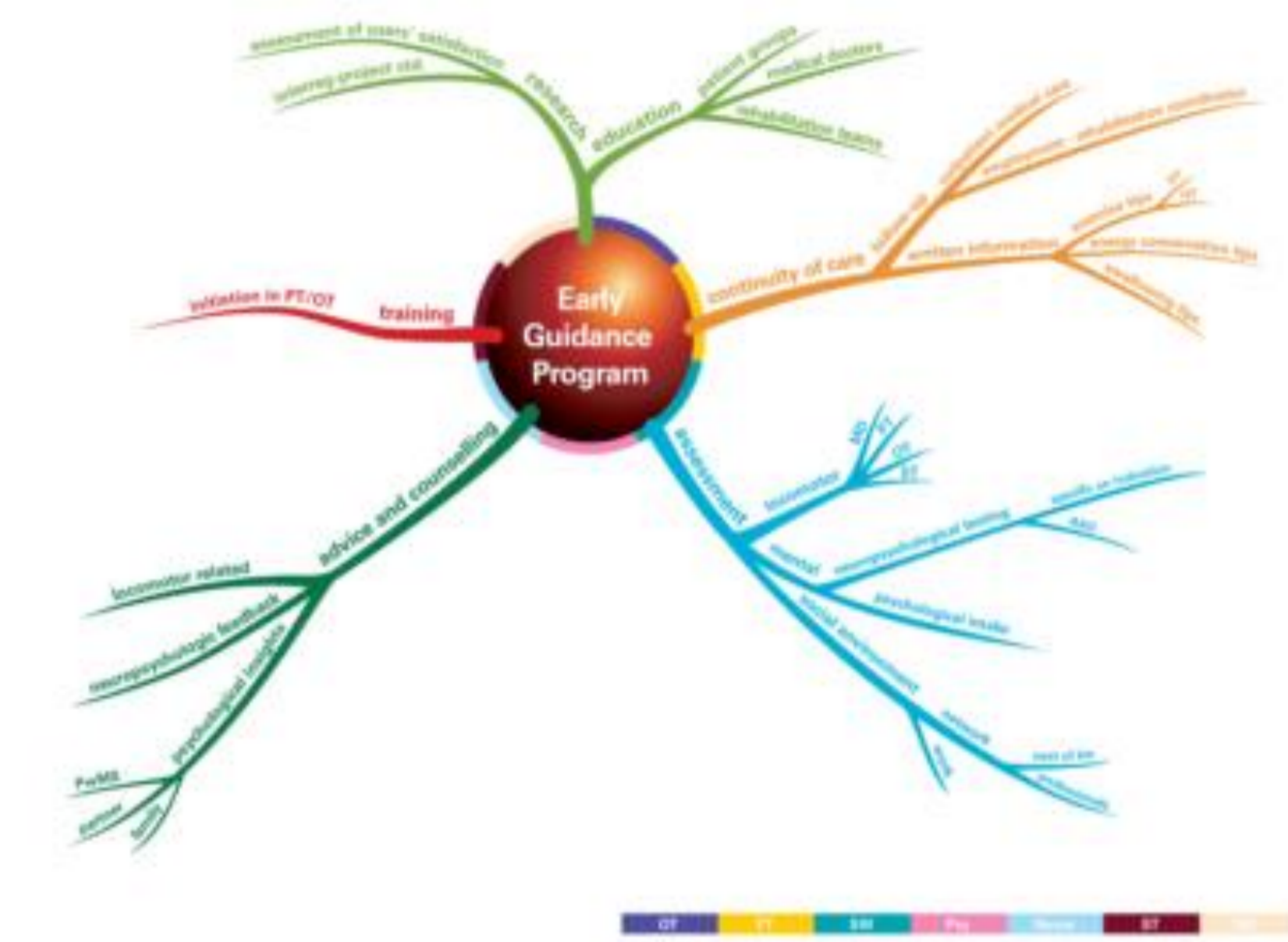
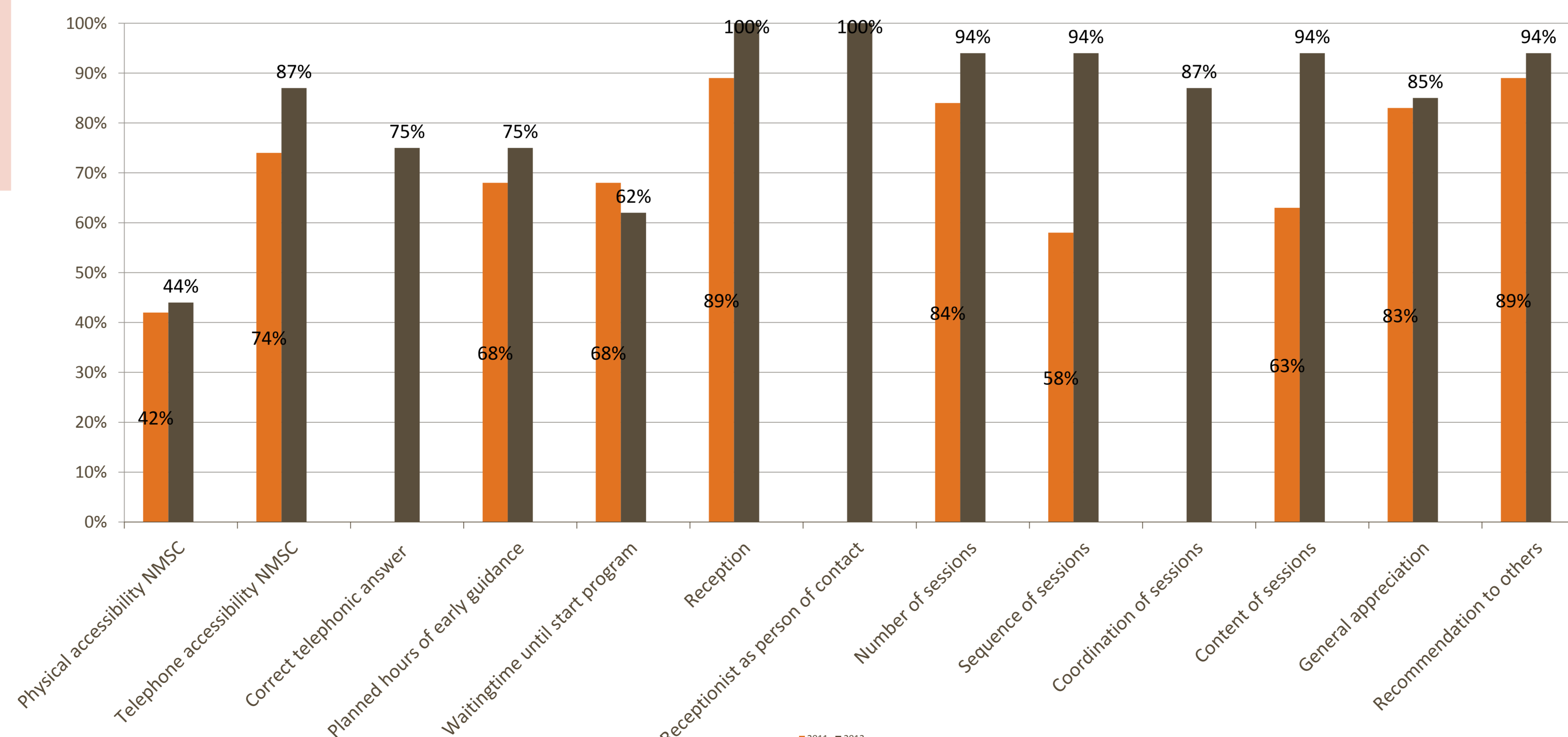
- May 2010 until May 2011
- October 2011 until October 2012

METHODS

In the first measurement the patients were handed a questionnaire on the next to last (5th) day. Anonymity of participation was assured and all questionnaires were assessed by the ombudsman. In the second measurement period patients were invited to complete the questionnaire online. The questionnaire was processed by www.surveymonkey.com. Initial 8 categories were assessed in the first satisfaction assessment: accessibility, reception, waiting time, organization, personal approach, competence, information given, privacy, referral to our hospital and general appreciation. In the second assessment 2 categories were added: correct telephone assistance and coordination of sessions. All items were scored using a 3 point ordinal scale : good, moderate, bad. The item general appreciation was scored using median, mean and range.

RESULTS

May 2010 until May 2011: 22 questionnaires delivered: 19 returned. Response rate 86%
October 2011 until October 2012: 20 questionnaires sent: 16 returned. Response rate 80%



DISCUSSION

The program allows novice PwMS to be introduced in Melsbroek's rehabilitation vision and approach. The program is modular, adaptable to the patients' needs and limited in time (6 sessions of 4 hours). It is delivered on an outpatient basis. This program is unique in every aspect eg. inviting novice PwMS to an expert MS Center, well dosed time duration, outpatient basis, complete and tailor-made character. By monitoring the satisfaction by patient questionnaires over the past 2 years we adapted the organization of our early guidance program to result in a present satisfaction rating score of 8.5/10.

It is our intention to examine the lesser items of satisfaction and adjust the program where possible.