

BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES

The majority of literature related to community engagement for people with MS is focused around adults of working age or the pediatric population, often neglecting the unique needs of college students with MS. This gap in knowledge highlights the need for increased literature and resources focused on this specific population. Visual disturbances, weakness, fatigue, poor balance, sensory changes, depression, incontinence, and mobility issues can significantly impact college students and their ability to be academically successful. Many of these students are learning to advocate for themselves for the first time.

The purpose of this implementation research is to develop an evidence based toolkit for college students with Multiple Sclerosis. The specific aims include, (1) Identify and describe challenges college students with MS face and (2) develop tools and resources to facilitate a successful college experience.

METHODS

The Re-AIM framework was used to guide the establishment and implementation of the toolkit. A scoping review of relevant evidence, followed by a review resources informed the toolkit development. Dissemination of the toolkit through a college resource center has been established as the first deployment of the toolkit.. Evaluation of the toolkit will occur with initial users of this toolkit.

RESULTS

College students with MS face a host of symptoms and impairments that impact higher education success. Review of the literature revealed physical limitations, fatigue, vision, slowed processing, heat sensitivity, bowel/bladder difficulties, and depression as factors having an impact on college success for people with MS. Many of these college students are unaware of how to access or request for accommodations in a college setting. The resulting toolkit includes resources and information specific to the unique challenges MS can cause in the college setting.

DISCUSSION/NEXT STEPS

Currently, most literature for managing MS is aimed at working age adults. As the age of diagnosis for MS has been progressively younger due to advances in early detection¹ there is a greater need for resources that address the needs of teens and young adults with MS. Resources for college aged individuals with MS is significantly limited. In addition, no research to date has explored the efficacy of disability services and accommodations in meeting the needs of college students with MS. This toolkit strives to fill this gap.

The toolkit will be piloted at MCPHS University. Feedback from initial users will guide refinement of the toolkit. The final toolkit will then be disseminated to MCPHS and other colleges and universities.

CONCLUSION

College students with MS face challenges unique to MS and the college setting, including a paucity of resources directed at this growing demographic. An evidence based toolkit for navigating college with MS is a needed patient centered resource to promote and facilitate success in college and while also improving overall quality of life.

REFERENCES



Toolkit



Literature Review



College Students with Multiple Sclerosis: Providing Solutions for Unmet Needs

Annalise Lowy, PT/s, Andrew Faria, PT/s, Kirsten Sjogren, PT/s, Cameron Watson, PT/s and Erin M Faraclas, PT, DPT, PhD, MSCS