The Significance of Upper Limb Function and Advances in Post-Stroke Rehabilitation Interventions in Occupational therapy

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The functionality of the hands plays a pivotal role in enabling individuals to perform essential tasks that contribute to their well-being and independence. In the field of rehabilitation, numerous patients face challenges in executing these crucial tasks due to movement disorders affecting their upper limbs. As Reilly noted, "Man can through the use of his hands as energized by mind and will, can influence the state of his own health" This statement underscores the central role of the upper limbs as key motor organs in maintaining human health. Consequently, one of the primary objectives of occupational therapy is to assist individuals in recovering from upper limb motor impairments, regardless of the underlying cause.

Stroke is among the leading causes of permanent upper limb movement disorders. In Japan, occupational therapy is frequently provided to patients recovering from stroke, with a strong emphasis on addressing these motor impairments. Previous research has highlighted that upper limb movement disorders following stroke significantly reduce patients' quality of life, making effective interventions critical to improving outcomes.

In response, numerous therapeutic approaches have been developed in recent years to address upper limb paralysis following stroke. These interventions include advanced methodologies such as robotic technology, peripheral nerve and muscle electrical stimulation, and constraint-induced movement therapy, all of which are actively being incorporated into occupational therapy practices. However, there remains an ongoing process of trial and refinement in determining the most effective application of these methods within the scope of occupational therapy.

This symposium will focus on presenting cutting-edge intervention techniques that combine technological innovations, such as robotics, with traditional occupational therapy approaches to address upper limb motor disorders in post-stroke patients in Japan. Through this exploration, we aim to provide insights into how these interventions can be optimized to enhance rehabilitation outcomes and improve patients' quality of life.