

In their shoes: What factors do restricted weight-bearing patients believe affect their recovery in their health journey in the rural setting?

Objective

The purpose of this study was to understand the patient experience of the health system whilst undergoing a period of restricted weight-bearing in the rural context.

Method

This qualitative study used Descriptive Phenomenology methodology to explore the patient experience in a rural health service in New South Wales in 2019. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 purposively selected participants with a musculoskeletal injury (lower limb fracture) that had required a long period of restriction on weight-bearing through the limb. A set of images were used as interview prompts and interpretive thematic analysis was completed.

Conclusion

This study found that there are opportunities to improve care coordination and consistent access to allied health services at key milestones of care in the rural context. An evidence-based care pathway for restricted weight-bearing patients could potentially ensure improved access to better healthcare pathways. Such a care pathway will need to be customised to the rural context and include the use of virtual services, coordination with social and community networks, and interdisciplinary models of care to enhance those in use.

Keywords

Patient experience, rural hospital, integrated care, care pathway, patient-centred care, frail fracture, lower limb fracture.



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