Phenomenological: Phenomenological:
What is Interpretative
exploring & exploring &
elizabeth.cassidy@brunel.ac.uk

Bettie Cassidy
Ataxia

Aim
- Introduce Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
- Briefly discuss how IPA might inform practice
- Present interim findings
- Discuss the possible implications for physiotherapy

What is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis?

Lived experience of a specified phenomenon

Phenomenological: exploring is understanding a life world
Idiographic (small n)
Interpretative (hermeneutic)

How Can IPA Inform Practice?

Horizontal Generalisability
Vertical Generalisability

- Generalisability is multidimensional (Johnson, 1997)
- Horizontal generalisability: across settings and samples within the original population (nomothetic)
- Vertical generalisability: provoke a reappraisal of what is known (idiographic), theoretical generalisability

IPA in Action
- No qualitative research about the experience of living with ataxia
- Recruitment via Ataxia UK
- Semi structured interviews
- Open questions
  - Can you tell me what living with ataxia is like?
  - Can you describe in more detail how ataxia has affected your day to day activities, the things that are important to you?

Participants

12 people with cerebellar ataxia
8 men
Age range: early 30s – late 60s
Ataxia 1- 25 years
Median: 13 years
1 full time wheelchair user
5 in work
7 retired
Experience of Physiotherapy □
Overview of Interim Findings

Exploring Theme 1

The contextualised experience of neurological impairment: embodied and embedded

Commonly Reported Impairments

- Imbalance and falls (n = 12)
- Fatigue (n = 11)
- Incoordination (n = 9)
- Speech problems (n = 9)
- Fluctuating symptoms (n = 9)
- Visual problems (n = 7)
- Cognitive processing (n = 9)
- Aches and pains (n = 5)
- Tremor (n = 5)
- Incontinence (n = 3)

Exploring Theme 1: Describing the Indescribable

- ‘It’s like everything is uncoordinated. The frustration of a thing making perfect sense when you say it in your head, but by the time it emerges from your mouth it’s kind of clumsy and awkward and … the same with moving about. It’s awkward, ungainly and painful and you can’t do things quickly or arrogantly or whatever. Everything’s kind of thick, knobbly and ungainly, uncoordinated, clumsy and just … it’s almost like being drunk all the time, except you aren’t.’ Bill

Exploring Theme 1

Embodied and Embedded

- ‘And I could not … particularly if people were behind me, walking behind me, that tends to make me worse … but I was like a pinball, I was bounced off this wall, went to that wall, I could not walk in a straight line down that corridor […] Really strange.’ Toby

Exploring Theme 1

Subtheme 1: My head was a fishbowl

- Describing the indescribable – an unfamiliar self

Exploring Theme 1

Embodied and Embedded

- ‘I don’t like to go in the social situation where I feel I’m being judged’ Susan
- ‘If I think people are watching me I just freeze and my legs won’t work’ Stella
- ‘I don’t want to seem odd in public’ Julia
- ‘Loads of pairs of eyes going chu-chu-chu – looking at you and thinking what’s wrong with him?’ Jim
Exploring Theme 1
Embodied and Embedded

'I should use a walking stick, I've got one in my bag, but I'm still coming to terms myself with the fact that I need to use it, being seen to be using it ... which is more about my own preconceptions and image I suppose. [...] but having something so obvious as a walking stick, it's just a visible sign to everybody – yes I am definitely different.' Jim

Discussion
- Richly detailed data about the personal experience of living with ataxia
- Shame and stigma associated with ‘disordered walking’ seemed to form a significant part of the experience of living with ataxia
- The experience of stigma is bound up with the work of physiotherapy (Sim 1990)
- Physiotherapists are well placed to listen to and appreciate the personal significance of patients’ narratives and their complexities and to offer practical support

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  ‘Contemporary physiotherapy practice for people with ataxia: the perspectives of clients and physiotherapists.’
- Register with Ataxia UK as a healthcare professional to receive information about the physiotherapy for people with ataxia guidance document.

References

References: Examples of IPA