

Statement Summary: impact of the of research on Post stroke visual impairment carried out by Prof Fiona Rowe since 2013 at The University of Liverpool



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*This statement was written after the respondent consented to be interviewed, this was transcribed and summarised and returned to the respondent for corroboration of fact and to give an opportunity to add any omitted details*

I'm an associate professor and I'm also the programme director for a multidisciplinary master's programme in Vision rehabilitation and I've been working at the University of South-Eastern Norway since 2007. I teach courses in optometry and lighting design and some of the nursing master's course modules. Vision and stroke has become a major part of my work over the last few years, most of my time is spent teaching and developing programmes but my research time has been in projects concerning vision and stroke, I have a PhD student who is now working on the topic. I've received a few grants looking at organising the patient pathways and the provision in stroke units in the hospitals. In Norway there is currently little awareness of the topic that vision problems occur after a stroke and I think that's the same elsewhere.

How did they find Prof Rowe?

I read her papers and we started corresponding in 2012 looking at this topic. You search for everything that's been done on a topic and her name kept popping up. I was very interested in the screening tool she described very early on and I contacted her to see if we could use it as we needed something similar. She's a leader in the field looking at vision and stroke and also thinking about structuring patient pathways. We have all these specialist eye health personnel- your system is a little bit different in the UK where you have a lot of the rehabilitation in the hospitals. In Norway we don't, so we need to find some different ways of organising it, and at the moment the major problem is not being attended to and a lot of people are leaving the hospital with visual impairments they don't know about. Fiona's been working on this for a while from different angles and with different people so we are using her research to build our cases and compare findings to see if we can structure things similarly.

I then applied for funding for a national network on vision and stroke and I contacted her to see if she could contribute and she was very positive and really very helpful in all ways, with research questions and helping out structuring the network it was very positive, we won't know for another few weeks if we will get it. I hope if we get this we can start to make big changes, we currently have an educational programme where we use this tool but it still needs to be done on a larger scale. There is no, or very little collaboration between health and education which is a big problem within this patient group because they need support from both departments that are separate, there is a

lack of communication and information and who does what, sometimes people do the same thing but most of the time nobody does anything because they think it is done by somebody else.

Without Fiona's work we would have been much further behind, it's difficult for us to do prevalence and epidemiological studies so we wouldn't have that background information, we don't have to repeat the work she's done. It's a very complex topic, you work with a lot of different professions and it's not a topic people generally know about or find very interesting or sexy, there are lots of other things that are much more fun to work with in optometry, with fancy medication or instrumentation, diagnosis and treatment because most of the treatment modalities for these patients are compensatory techniques or information, that's one of the problems with these kind of conditions. She published an interview study about the experiences of living with visual impairment after stroke, people recognise it but they don't think about it if they don't know someone that has vision problems after stroke.

If we get the grant Fiona will be on the steering committee and part of some of the working groups. I think part of the enthusiasm about the network was due to me saying she was on board, other people know of her work, that so many people in such a short period of time really wanted to take part, in the municipalities, in the hospitals, rehabilitation centres, user groups, other researchers in Europe just shows people see that there is a need for more information and collaboration. I'm looking forward to working together in the future.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Helen Falkenberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping loop at the end.