A POSITIVE TURNING POINT IN LIFE
Experiences of a comprehensive interdisciplinary rehabilitation programme in persons with post-polio syndrome

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Introduction
There is an overall understanding that persons with post-polio syndrome (PPS) can benefit from being admitted to a team specialised in PPS and go through an individualized rehabilitation programme, but there is no study that has evaluated or explored the effects of such programmes.

Aims
To describe and enhance our understanding of how persons with PPS experience the influence of an individualized, goal-oriented, comprehensive rehabilitation programme.

Methods and material
Twelve persons (40 to 73 years of age) with clinically verified PPS who had taken part in an individualized, goal-oriented, comprehensive interdisciplinary rehabilitation programme were interviewed 9 to 18 months after discharge. The qualitative research interviews were analysed with the constant comparative method of Grounded theory.

Results
The rehabilitation programme was experienced as a turning-point in the participant’s life.

Before rehabilitation
- Being on a downward slope without control
  - Not being the one I used to be
  - Being unsure about the future
  - Being afflicted with polio a second time

During rehabilitation
- Being supported in a process of change in a positive direction
  - Learning about late effects of polio and how to manage the difficulties
  - Reflecting on the self
  - Encountering others with late effects of polio provides awareness and hope
  - Writing a rehabilitation plan contributes to increased awareness

After rehabilitation
- Struggling with the process of change to master daily life
  - Taking responsibility for the rehabilitation plan
  - Struggling to establish new habits
  - Struggling to redefine the self

At the time of the interview
- Passing through the process of change to a different but good life
  - Having a sense of control how to manage late effects of polio
  - Having established new habits
  - Accepting a life with late effects of polio
  - Taking on a changed valued self
  - Looking to the future with confidence

Before rehabilitation they felt being in a downward slope without control. Rehabilitation was the start of a process of change whereby they acquired new skills which, over time, contributed to a different but good life. After about a year, they had a sense of control and had accepted life with late effects of polio. They had also established new habits, taken on a changed valued self and could look at their future with confidence.

Conclusions
Persons with PPS can benefit from a rehabilitation programme and experience positive changes in their management of daily activities and in their view of their PPS, their future and their self. The results also indicate that the effects of such a programme goes beyond that of reducing impairments.