

# Perceived Facilitators of & Barriers to Actual Arm Use During Everyday Activities in Community-Dwelling Individuals With Chronic Stroke

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**PURPOSE:** Our aim was to gain a deeper understanding of perceived predictors for actual arm use during daily functional activities.

**DESIGN:** Qualitative study.

**METHOD:** Semi-structured interview data collected from individuals with chronic stroke living in the community. Codebook thematic analysis used for the data analysis.

**RESULTS:** Six participants 5-18 years post stroke with moderate to severe UE impairment. Three domains were identified: Person, Context, and Task. Themes for the Person domain included mental (cognitive effort, lack of acceptance), behavioral (routines/habits, self-evaluation), and physical (stiffness/fatigue). Themes for the Context domain included social environment (being in public, presence and actions of others) and time constraints (being in a hurry). Themes for the task domain included necessity to complete bilateral and unilateral tasks, and safety (increased risk of accidents).

**CONCLUSION:** Actual arm use is a complex construct related to the characteristics of the person, contextual environment, and the nature of the task. Facilitators included cognitive effort, routines/habits, self-evaluation, and the perceived necessity. Barriers included in lack of acceptance, stiffness/fatigue, being in public, being in a hurry, and risk of accidents. Social support was both a facilitator and a barrier.

**IMPACT STATEMENT:** Our results support the growing literature that actual arm use in real world situations is a broad construct beyond upper extremity motor impairment and functional ability. Improvements made in the clinic will not necessarily translate to daily arm use in the real world.

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