

People with brain tumours often experience problems with memory, concentration, behaviour and recognising other people's emotions. These changes can be very upsetting and can make everyday life harder for patients and their families. While there are rehabilitation programmes to help people after stroke or other brain injuries, there are very few designed specifically for people with brain tumours.

The SCARF-BT study set out to see whether it was possible to identify brain tumour patients who struggle to recognise emotions and to offer them a rehabilitation programme they could do at home. The researchers also wanted to know whether patients would agree to take part and manage to complete the programme.

First, we realised they needed a quick way to spot cognitive (thinking) problems. We created a simple, five-minute computer test and used it with 111 patients before their treatment. About two-thirds had at least one cognitive difficulty. Problems with recognising emotions, paying attention and visual perception were the most common. Many patients did not realise they had these problems until the tests showed them.

Although patients and carers agreed that cognitive problems were important, very few patients actually started the home-based rehabilitation. Many felt overwhelmed by their diagnosis, surgery and treatment, or were too tired to join in. Because so few completed the programme, the researchers did not move on to a larger trial. The study showed that quick screening for cognitive problems is possible in routine NHS clinics and that these problems are common. Future work will focus on helping patients understand these difficulties, choosing the best time to offer rehabilitation, and creating online resources to support patients and families.