ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Despite the fact that stroke is the leading cause of death among Indonesians accounting for approximately 20% of all deaths, there has been very limited nursing and policy research regarding their continuum care. Therefore, purpose of this study was to describe the characteristics and the experiences of patients with ischemic stroke and their family caregivers before and after discharge.

**Method:** The study had a qualitative descriptive design including a literature review, preliminary study and a main study with semi-structured interviews. Purposive sampling was used to recruit dyads of ischemic stroke patients over 45 years old (n = 12) and their family caregivers over 18 years old (n = 12) from one public hospital in the center of South Tangerang. Data were collected from November 2017 through January 2018. The 30 minutes face-to-face interviews were conducted at the participants’ homes. The data were collected from (1) medical records and (2) one-on-one interviews in separate rooms with the patients and the main family caregivers. The data were analyzed using a content analysis approach. The Research Ethics Committee of St. Luke’s International University approved the study (No. 17 -A062).

**Results:** A total of 24 participants were eligible for analysis. The patients’ characteristics included age (M, 60.5), mostly married, with fifty percent actively working. The patients were all living with at least four people in the same house. Four patients had stroke accompanied by diabetes mellitus. The mean length of hospital stay was 7.8 days and the mean Barthel Index of Activity of Daily Living score was 62.5. For family caregivers the mean age was 49.3 years old and 83% of the main caregivers were spouses. There were seven phases that emerged from the transitional experiences of patients with ischemic stroke and their family caregivers. During hospitalization, there were three phases: acute phase, post-acute and at time of discharge. One month after discharge, three phases emerged: facing difficulties, seeking treatment and expecting recovery. Within three months there was one phase: resuming their normal life.