“Functional electrical stimulation (FES) impacted on important aspects of my life”—A qualitative exploration of chronic stroke patients’ and carers’ perceptions of FES in the management of dropped foot.

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ABSTRACT
Our purpose was to explore the impact of functional electrical stimulation (FES), as applied in the management of dropped foot, on patients with chronic stroke and their carers. A qualitative phenomenological study was undertaken. Participants were recruited from the Lothian FES clinic. Data were collected by using semistructured face-to-face interviews and analysed by using the framework of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Thirteen patients and nine carers consented to participate in the study. The overarching theme that emerged from the data was that “FES impacted on important aspects of my life.” Four subthemes were identified: 1) “Walking with FES is much better”; 2) “FES helped regain control of life”; 3) “Feeling good comes with using FES”; and 4) “FES is not perfect but it is of value.” This study provides insights into the perceptions of patients and carers of the impact of FES. These results have implications for clinicians delivering an FES service for the management of dropped foot after stroke.