

Participation outcomes of people with spinal cord injury living in Australia.

Lisa Broom, Libby Callaway, Linda Barclay, Christine Migliorini, Louise Farnworth
Department of Occupational Therapy, Monash University, Australia

Introduction: Nine thousand people with spinal cord injury (SCI) currently live in Australia, with projected increasing incidence over time. Past research demonstrates variable, but overall reduced participation in or satisfaction with vocational, social and leisure roles following SCI. In addition, a range of secondary health conditions are experienced after SCI which may further impact upon participation. Greater time is spent in personal care tasks and leisure activities can expand to fill the void experienced by loss of a paid employment role. These outcomes may impact upon occupational choice, health and wellbeing. Occupational therapists are well placed to influence outcomes in these domains.

Objectives: The objectives of this study are to i) investigate participation outcomes of people with SCI who have returned to community living in Victoria, Australia; ii) examine the impact of the environment on their participation; and iii) measure subjective levels of satisfaction with life.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were completed, recorded and transcribed. Emergent themes were derived from interview transcripts. Respondents also completed a range of standardised assessments and questionnaires including the *Spinal Cord Injury Secondary Conditions Scale*; *Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21*; *Functional Independence MeasureTM*; *Community Integration Questionnaire*; and the *Personal Wellbeing Index*. In addition, each participant undertook seven days of Experience Sampling Method (ESM) using a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). Spearman Rho correlations were used to determine if any associations existed between the assessment data and the ESM time use data. T-tests for unrelated groups were used for time use data analysis.

Results: Results of the participation measures used in this study will be presented for the first 50 participants, including activity, community integration and satisfaction with life outcomes. The experience of engagement within environments in which participation occurred will be detailed from ESM data.

Conclusion: The results of this project are of significance for occupational therapists in beginning to understand the participation outcomes, restrictions and opportunities for people with SCI who have returned to community living. Environmental and secondary health conditions that may impact upon occupational choices and life satisfaction for this group will be highlighted and implications for occupational therapy practice will be discussed.