

PERCEIVED PARTICIPATION, EXPERIENCES FROM PERSONS WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY IN THEIR TRANSITION PERIOD FROM HOSPITAL TO HOME. A qualitative study based on the 'grounded theory' method.

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Objective: it is suggested that participation should be achieved at the end of the rehabilitation process. However, there is a lack of consensus on the definition, the conceptualization and the measurement of participation. This study aims to add to the existing body of knowledge of participation by exploring the 'person perceived participation' in individuals with Spinal Cord Injury (SCI).

Design: based on the 'grounded theory' approach; in-depth, semi structured interviews were conducted with 11 SCI patients from a rehabilitation cohort in their transition period from hospital to home, in order to gain an insider perspective on the concept of participation.

Results: results identified three different categories of participation; social participation, occupational participation and socio-occupational participation. The participants conceptualize participation as a set of values, including experiencing free choice to perform activities, performing according to the person's identity, experiencing personal growth, belonging by experiencing trust and security, feeling validated, having a sense of control, experiencing a sense of importance and finding equal identities.

Conclusion: from a client perspective; participation is as a complex, multidimensional construct and can be considered as a dyad between the individual's social interactions and his specific activities performed. Participation was not experienced by the SCI patients as an objective way of performing activities within a societal context or as frequencies of activities performed, but rather as an internal process of negotiation that appeared to be based on balancing personal and societal values.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy: the complexity of participation, in this study structured around different categories and represented as a cluster of values experienced by the participants, highlights possibilities to apply this knowledge in practice. An application for occupational therapists is to identify which category of participation is important for the individual's sense of participation. From this point of view, it is possible to identify patients at risk: lack of social components could lead to social deprivation, lack of occupational components could lead to occupational deprivation and alienation. On the other hand it creates possibilities to use the different values as tools to enhance the sense of participation in SCI patients.