

Quality of Life after Spinal Cord Injury- qualitative research of elite athlete

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Abstract

Statement of the Problem: The World Health Organization defines the quality of life as individuals' perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. It has been found that quality of life is deteriorating as a result of SCI and may be affected by personal (sociodemographic and psychological), cultural (race and ethnicity), economic, and environmental (availability of medical care, quality of education, employment opportunities, and place of residence) factors. People with SCI on average tend to report a decreased feeling of well-being and grade their physical, mental, and social health lower than nondisabled person. The purpose of this study was to assess the quality of life and methods of coping with the spinal cord injury situation in 3 elite athletes after their sporting careers have ended due to a serious spinal cord injury.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: The criteria for inclusion in the study required that participants had represented their country in sporting competitions and that they had won the championship title in a sports event at the international level. Three people took part in the study: former world champion in jumping on a BMX bike (Great Britain), former world junior ski jumping champion (Austria) and former European karate champion (Poland). Participation in the study consisted of giving an interview via an Internet communicator and filling an online WHOQoL and personal questionnaires.

Findings: Analyzing the overall quality of life feeling, P1 perceived his QoL negatively, while the other two were positive. P1 described his general health as very poor, while P2 and P3 were classified as very good and good, respectively. The highest quality of his life in each domain was perceived by P3.

Conclusion & Significance: Despite a traumatic accident, the sudden end of a successful sporting career, and a completely

changed life, the respondents in this study positively described their quality of life. Each participant maintains a strong connection to the sporting environment and is

socially involved. The involvement of athletes after SCI in the sporting environment prevents them from losing



their sporting identity and makes it easier to find themselves in a new life situation. This may also serve as an example for other people with severe disabilities, encouraging them to engage in social activities.



Biography:

Agata Goraczko, PhD student, Physiotherapist, Founder of Foundation "We walk for", is working in Clinic of Neurorehabilitation in Wroclaw. She has many years of experience in the field of neurorehabilitation, especially with patients after spinal cord injury and brain injury. She conducts research with top athletes who ended their careers as a result of spinal cord injury. Agata's passion is to find hope in each situation and help people to broaden their perspective and possibilities. As co-founder of foundation, every year she and her friend organize charity expeditions- they walk for people who cannot walk.

Speaker Publications:

1. Ciampolini V, Columna L, Lapolli B, Grosso EC, Silva DAS, Galatti LR (2017) Quality of life of Brazilian wheelchair tennis athletes across competitive and elite levels. *Motriz Rev. Educ. Fis.*, 23, 101703.
2. Palimaru A, Cunningham WE, Dillistone M, Vargas-Bustamante A, Liu H, Hays RDA (2017) Comparison of Perceptions of Quality of Life Among Adults with Spinal Cord Injury in the United States Versus the United Kingdom. *Qual. Life Res.* 26, 3143–3155.

3. Chatzilelecas E, Filipović B, Petrinović L (2015) Differences in quality of life according to the level of physical activity between two groups of basketball players in the wheelchairs. SportLogia 11, 11–17.
4. Badenhorst M, Brown JC, Lambert MI, Mechelen W, Verhagen E (2018) Quality of life among individuals with rugby-related spinal cord injuries in South Africa: A descriptive crosssectional study. BMJ Open 8, e020890.
5. Andersen SR, Biering-Sørensen F, Hagen EM, Nielsen JF, Bach FW, Finnerup NB (2016) Pain, spasticity and quality of life in individuals with traumatic spinal cord injury in Denmark. Spinal Cord 54, 973–979.

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