

DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH SCI – SIGNPOSTS FOR REHABILITATION STRATEGIES

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Purpose: Improvement of participation is one of the primary rehabilitation goals for people with spinal cord injury (SCI), as having a positive effect on health and well-being. This paper aims at synthesizing evidence on determinants of social participation observed in persons with SCI and to depict grounds for interventions aimed at enhancement of participation.

Method: A literature review

Results: The terms describing participation and its components are often used interchangeably, without clarification of meaning. Determinants of participation referring to SCI include cause, level, the severity of SCI, time of living with SCI, posttraumatic stress disorders, pain and other secondary conditions. Environmental components affecting participation are most frequently addressed in contemporary studies on participation after SCI and comprise: social attitudes, personal care, support, financial resources, cost of living, access to information, personal equipment, transport, accessibility of natural and built environment, systems services and policies (particularly related to health) and weather. Personal factors (e.g. age, sex, marital status, personality traits, cognitive and mnemonic factors, social skills, coping resources and strategies, the image of self) are mainly analyzed in the context of adjustment.

Conclusions: Factors determining participation are mutually dependent. There are few reports on participation determinants from middle and low-income countries. More studies on mental functions determining participation in diverse social and economic contexts are warranted. Determinants of participation should be applied in the tailoring of interventions on both individual and community settings as well as on macro-level in order to optimize community participation and the meaningfulness of life for each individual.

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