

Project Title: Access Active Rehab program

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Project Description

Aim: To explore the adoption of the Access Active Rehab program as an adjunct to rehabilitation of inpatients with brain or spinal cord injury.

Objectives:

- **Objective 1:** To describe the personal, clinical, and physical characteristics of participants who choose to participate in the Access Active Rehab program at baseline and at discharge from hospital.
- **Objective 2:** To describe the levels of participation and exercise self-efficacy in participants who engaged in the Access Active Rehab program at the start and end of the program, and 3 months post discharge.
- **Objective 3:** To measure perceptions of the programs from participants.
- **Objective 4:** To explore the experiences of participants in connecting with community para sport/recreation clubs after discharge, after engaging in the hospital-based Access Active Rehab program.

Method:

1. **Recruitment of Patients/Participants:** Patients engaged in the Access Active Rehab program were invited to join the research project as a research participant by their treating therapist within their rehabilitation unit.
2. **The intervention:** All study participants received usual allied health interventions during their inpatient rehabilitation admission. These interventions included (but were not limited to): physiotherapy, speech pathology, occupational therapy, and social work interventions. The program was delivered by experienced sport management staff and fully trained and accredited exercise physiologists, working closely with the BIRU and SIU staff to deliver activities at each unit, on a weekly basis. On hospital discharge, participants were provided with a description of their engagement in the Access Active Rehab program in the discharge summary and clinical handovers. This was then provided to the relevant goal-directed transition programs, with the view to the transition program incorporating group physical activity/exercise into the participant's future goal planning. For participants with traumatic brain injury, those programs were ABI-TRS or ABIO. For participants with a spinal cord injury, programs included TRP and SPOT.
3. **Data collection:** Patient reported outcomes were collected electronically by the Jasmine Unit contact upon commencement, at hospital discharge and at 3 months post discharge.

Key Findings

Recovery after brain and spinal cord injuries can involve months of inpatient rehabilitation, followed by a facilitated transition into the community. Bringing sport into rehabilitation has the potential to provide individuals with a sense of purpose, belonging, enjoyment and facilitates their adjustment to their 'new normal'. Three-quarters of people with a disability in Australia do not engage in sufficient physical activity for their health. Using sports included in the Access Active Rehab program to achieve this physical activity goal comes with the added benefit of facilitating balance, strength, and endurance.

The results of this project did not find that the Access Active Rehab program made a significant difference to the likelihood of participants engaging in community-based sport three months post hospital discharge, however key learnings have been recorded from this program evaluation that will help support and improve future iterations of the Active Access Rehab program. One important finding was that the participants enjoyed participating and the program improved their inpatient stay experience.

Conclusion:

The Access Active Rehab program was important, and valuable to the participants during their inpatient stay. However, the research also suggests that connecting people after discharge to organisations such as Sporting Wheelies may be equally important. Some patients who engaged in a para sport program at the Princess Alexandra Hospital over the next 5 to 10 years may become Paralympic athletes, while others will benefit from the integration of leisure physical activity into their inpatient rehabilitation and the impact it will have on fostering healthy lives after discharge.