

Project Title

Physiotherapy Clinical Practice Guidelines for People with Spinal Cord Injury

Research Team

Metro South Health partnered with NIISQ to expand a NSW initiative to involve Queensland in developing the first clinical practice guidelines for the physiotherapy management of people with spinal cord injuries. The project, coordinated by Dr Joanne Glinsky and Professor Lisa Harvey of the John Walsh Centre for Rehabilitation Research and The Kolling Institute (University of Sydney), included a collaborative team of Queensland private and public practising physiotherapists, led by the physiotherapists of the Queensland Spinal Cord Injuries Service, Metro South Health.

Project partners included consumers with spinal cord injury, physiotherapists working in the spinal cord injury services throughout Australia and New Zealand, physiotherapists and other health professionals working in the community sector, senior academics, researchers and funding bodies. Funding contributors included the iCARE (Insurance and Care NSW), TAC (Transport Accident Commission VIC), Lifetime Support (SA) and the NIISQ Agency (QLD).

The team was made up of two committees, the Guidelines Management Committee and the Guideline Development Committee. The evidence-based recommendations and the consensus-based statements within the guidelines, were developed only by members of the Guideline Development Committee.

Project Description

Aim:

The aim of the project was to provide clear guidance on the physiotherapy management of adults with spinal cord injury across the continuum of care.

The project consisted by three phases:

1. Qualitative research and analysis to better understand physiotherapists', other healthcare providers' and consumers' perspectives and priorities
2. Systematic reviews, consensus meetings and guideline development:
 - This phase involved developing the clinical practice guidelines, including setting the key questions in population, intervention, control and outcomes (PICO) format, extensively reviewing the literature, and then grading the evidence. Consensus statements have been developed where there is insufficient evidence to answer a PICO question. The Guideline Development Committee was formed to vote on the evidence and to develop the recommendations within the guideline. An external review panel, with representation from across Australia, was used to finalise recommendations and statements within the guidelines.
3. Translating the guidelines into practice:
 - The QLD branch of the Guideline Development Committee has developed a sustainable translation plan. The dissemination strategies and activities aimed to build awareness among therapy providers, service users and funders. This ensures all relevant physiotherapists, other healthcare providers and consumers are fully aware of the guidelines, understand their relevance and recommendations, and facilitate the implementation of the clinical practice guidelines into practice.

Key Findings

The project delivered a guideline document and website for physiotherapists which contains clear evidence-based recommendations and consensus statements (used when no or limited evidence is available) to guide physiotherapy interventions for people with spinal cord injury. The guidelines are applicable to other allied health practitioners who provide complementary and combined management of the person with spinal cord injury. The guidelines provide a summary of the evidence to guide clinical care across the continuum.

Conclusion

The project has reached providers across QLD, including physiotherapists, exercise physiologists and occupational therapists working in the public and private sectors in all stages of spinal cord injury service management. The team continue to actively partner with key stakeholders including Metro South Health, Queensland Spinal Cord Injuries Service, other QLD health services, peak bodies such as Spinal Life Australia, relevant provider associations, tertiary institutions and the NIISQ Agency, including its networks and consumers, to ensure translation of the project. A variety of activities and methods have been utilised including, but not limited to, webinars, lectures and workshops.

Further information regarding this project can be found on the SCI Physiotherapy Guidelines website:

<https://scriptguide.com>.