



Research Brief

Life Satisfaction Trend and Mortality after Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury – A Cohort Study

Introduction

Spinal cord injury (SCI) can negatively impact many aspects of an individual's life, as well as increase the risk of mortality. Most research on SCI and mortality has focused on health and behavior-related factors that decrease life expectancy of people with SCI, but little has been done on how life satisfaction relates to survival. Our objective was to look at the relationship between survival status and one's attitude towards life (life satisfaction) over a 10-year period among individuals with SCI. We looked at trends in life satisfaction over three 5-year periods to determine if there is a positive correlation between longevity and quality of life. The Life Situation Questionnaire-Revised (LSQ-R) was used to measure life satisfaction and included 20 satisfaction items measured on a five-point scale (1 being very dissatisfied, 3 being neutral, and 5 being very satisfied).

Key Findings

- Twenty percent of participants were reported deceased by December 31, 2019, while the survivors were reported to be younger, ambulatory, fewer years post injury, more likely to be female, and the neurologic injury level was lower than cervical.
- The average LSQ-R score was 70 at both time 1 and 2 (the years 2003 and 2008, respectively), and at time 3 (the year 2013) it was 69.
- Thirteen percent of participants showed an increase in the LSQ-R score over the ten-year period, 16% showed a decrease, and 71% showed variation.
- Older age, higher injury levels, and non-ambulatory status were associated with greater odds of mortality, while higher LSQ-R scores and increasing life satisfaction history signified lower odds of mortality.
- Participants who showed an increase in life satisfaction over the 10 years were 72% less likely of death compared to others who did not show an increase.

Conclusion

There are multiple health and behavioral factors that can contribute to life expectancy among individuals with SCI, but quality of life could be one of the most important factors. These findings show that life satisfaction is an important prediction of survival among individuals with SCI. With this information, there is a possibility to enhance longevity among SCI individuals by focusing on improving the quality of life. Additional research is needed to better identify the positive factors associated with increased life satisfaction.

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