

Combined Burden of Bladder, Bowel and Sexual Dysfunction as Predictors of Quality of Life in Chronic SCI: A Cross-sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Bladder, bowel and sexual dysfunction among individuals with chronic spinal cord injury independently impair quality of life. However, their synergistic effect and correlated contribution to quality of life are underexplored in the Indian context of rehabilitation.

Aim: To determine the correlation between bladder, bowel, and sexual dysfunction with QOL in chronic SCI and to ascertain which dysfunctions are the most significant predictors of quality of life.

Materials and Methods: This study was a cross-sectional observational study conducted among adults with chronic Spinal cord injury (SCI). Participants were recruited with the age criteria of 18-64 years, married individuals, Neurological level of injury mid-thoracic, lumbar and lumbo-sacral with AIS grades A-D. Recruitment was done from multiple neuro-rehabilitation centres. Approximately 79 patients were supposed to participate in the study. Assessment of bladder dysfunction was measured by Spinal Cord Injury-Quality of Life bladder management difficulty score (SCI-QOL bladder management difficulty), Bowel dysfunction is

measured through Neurogenic Bowel Dysfunction score (NBD Score), sexual dysfunction is measured through Integrated Index for Sexual Function (IISF) and Quality Of Life is measured via World Health Organisation Quality of Life Bref (WHO-QOL Bref).

Results: Data normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test in the software IBM SPSS. Significant negative correlations were found between quality of life (QoL) and bladder dysfunction ($r=-0.210$), bowel dysfunction ($r=-0.309$), and sexual dysfunctions ($r=-0.031$), at a level of significance 0.05 (p -value=0.05).

Conclusion: Bladder, bowel, and sexual dysfunctions greatly affect the quality of life for those with chronic spinal cord injuries. The interplay of these dysfunctions underscores the importance of integrated multidisciplinary rehabilitation strategies that include management of autonomic and sexual health in addition to standard neurological physiotherapy treatments. Taking a holistic approach to these issues may enhance overall rehabilitation results and long-term quality of life for individuals suffering from chronic SCI.

Keywords: Defaecation disorders, Neurogenic, Quality of life, Sexual dysfunction, Spinal cord injuries, Urinary bladder.

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