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Project: *Activity-based therapy after spinal cord injury in Alberta: A qualitative exploration of current patients' and providers' perspectives and future potential*

Background

Spinal cord injury (SCI) is a chronic neurological illness that impacts various aspects of a person's life, resulting in loss of motor, sensory, physical, and social functioning. The prevalence of SCI in Canada is 85,556, with an incidence of 3,675 cases in 2010. This number is projected to increase in the coming decades.

Activity-based Therapy (ABT) is a treatment approach that focuses on retraining the neuromuscular system below the level of SCI. These activities aim to retrain the neuromuscular system for specific motor tasks. ABT differs from other rehabilitation approaches by using a neuroplasticity approach instead of a compensatory approach. ABT has the potential to improve motor, sensory, and even bowel and bladder function after an SCI.

The proposed research project will explore the perspectives of people with SCI and providers regarding ABT, identify practical strengths and drawbacks of ABT for people with SCI, and explore patient perspectives on how to best engage patients in planning ABT to maximize the achievement of activity goals. In addition to that, this project aims to create a partnership between people with SCI, organizations providing activity-based therapy, and researchers working on activity-based therapy in Edmonton.

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Reflexive thematic analysis will be used to synthesize the barriers and facilitators to implementing ABT for SCI in Edmonton, implementing a pragmatic theory lens to identify concrete actions that could improve the implementation of ABT in this city. A specialized qualitative data management software (i.e., Dedoose) will be used to facilitate the analysis. Results interpretations will be triangulated by the involved stakeholders, ensuring results' trustworthiness.

Expected outcomes:

1. A solid working group that potentially can grow as an ABT community of practice in Edmonton and across the province.
2. Reflexive themes, explaining barriers and facilitators for using ABT in this province.
3. A clearly defined plan to foster the implementation of ABT for SCI in Edmonton.