

RISK AWARENESS INSTEAD OF FEAR – PATIENT PERSPECTIVE ON FALLS IN AMBULATING PERSONS WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY

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INTRODUCTION

Individuals with incomplete spinal cord injury (iSCI) often have a remaining, but affected, ambulating capacity. Fall incidence is reported to be high in this group, and this might be a serious problem due to possible subsequent injuries or concerns about falling.

The subjective experiences of falls and consequences of falls have never been studied in this group. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore and describe perceptions of falls, risk of falling, concerns about falling and consequences of falling in individuals with non-traumatic iSCI.

METHOD

Six individuals with iSCI took part in semi-structured individual interviews. All had affected ambulatory capacity and were dependent on walking aids at least outdoors (Table).

The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim and analyzed using qualitative content analysis with an inductive approach.

Gender	Age (years)	Neurological level of lesion	Years post injury	Injury cause
Woman	49	T12	3	Tumor
Woman	68	C4 Lumbar	10 2	Vascular injury Spinal stenosis
Woman	70	C3-C7	1,5	Fall
Man	65	Th10-Th11	2,5	Tumor
Woman	40	L3-S1	1	Surgical complication
Woman	68	Lumbar	2	Surgical complication

CONCLUSIONS

The informants experienced having: a weakened body, a vulnerability to falling and subsequent consequences, and an increased fall risk awareness. They struggled to resume activities and participation in daily life using thorough fall prevention and compensating strategies.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

It is important to consider that both physical, personal and environmental factors appear to affect how persons with remaining walking ability after incomplete spinal cord injury perceive falling.



RESULTS

Three manifest categories could be inferred with regard to how the informants experienced falls and risk of falling influenced by incomplete SCI:



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