

FEAR OF FALLING? NO WAY!

PERCEPTION OF FALLS AND FEAR OF FALLING IN WHEELCHAIR RUGBY PLAYERS

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INTRODUCTION

Wheelchair rugby (WCR), a game developed for athletes with tetraplegia or other disabilities affecting both arms and legs, is regarded a tough sport, and the players expose themselves to falls and risky situations.

The **aim** of the study was to explore perceptions of falls and fear of falling in WCR players with spinal cord injury (SCI).



Photo: Miguel Medina/AFP

METHOD

A semi-structured interview was conducted with five tetraplegic male WCR players from Sweden, aged 26-35 years, 5-27 years post injury and with 1-14 years of WCR experience, regarding perception of falls and fall-related injuries, management of falling and fear of falling.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and analyzed using an inductive qualitative content analysis.



Photo: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

CONCLUSIONS

Wheelchair rugby players with SCI experienced no fear of falling and looked upon falling as a part of life. However, they reported that risk-taking was higher on the court than in daily life.

Playing rugby provided them with skills in falling, in addition to physical fitness and the opportunity to share experiences and learn from peers. This made them less vulnerable and more self-efficient in daily life.



Photo: Adrian Dennis/AFP

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Practicing falling and how to get up again in safe environments for people with SCI as well as peer learning could be beneficial to reduce fear of falling and increase self-efficacy.

RESULTS

Four manifest categories could be inferred with regard to how the informants experienced falls and fear of falling influenced by SCI and WCR:



This is a pilot-study for the multicentre SCI Prevention of Falls (SCIP FALLS) Study.

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