

To fall or not to fall – that's the question

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INTRODUCTION

Individuals with incomplete spinal cord injury (SCI) often have a remaining, but affected, ambulatory 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 investigated 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 traumatic incomplete SCI.

METHOD

Fifteen individuals with traumatic incomplete SCI and walking $\geq 75\%$ of the time for mobility needs took part in semi-structured individual interviews. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim and analyzed using qualitative content analysis with an inductive approach.

Jørgensen V and Roaldsen KS. Negotiating identity and self-image: Perceptions of falls in ambulatory individuals with spinal cord injury – a qualitative study. Clin.rehab.31(4);544-554

CONCLUSIONS

Ambulatory individuals with incomplete SCI considered falls to be a part of life. However, falls interfered with the informants' identities and self-images as normal, healthy, and well-functioning. A few expressed dysfunctional concerns about falling, and interventions should target these.

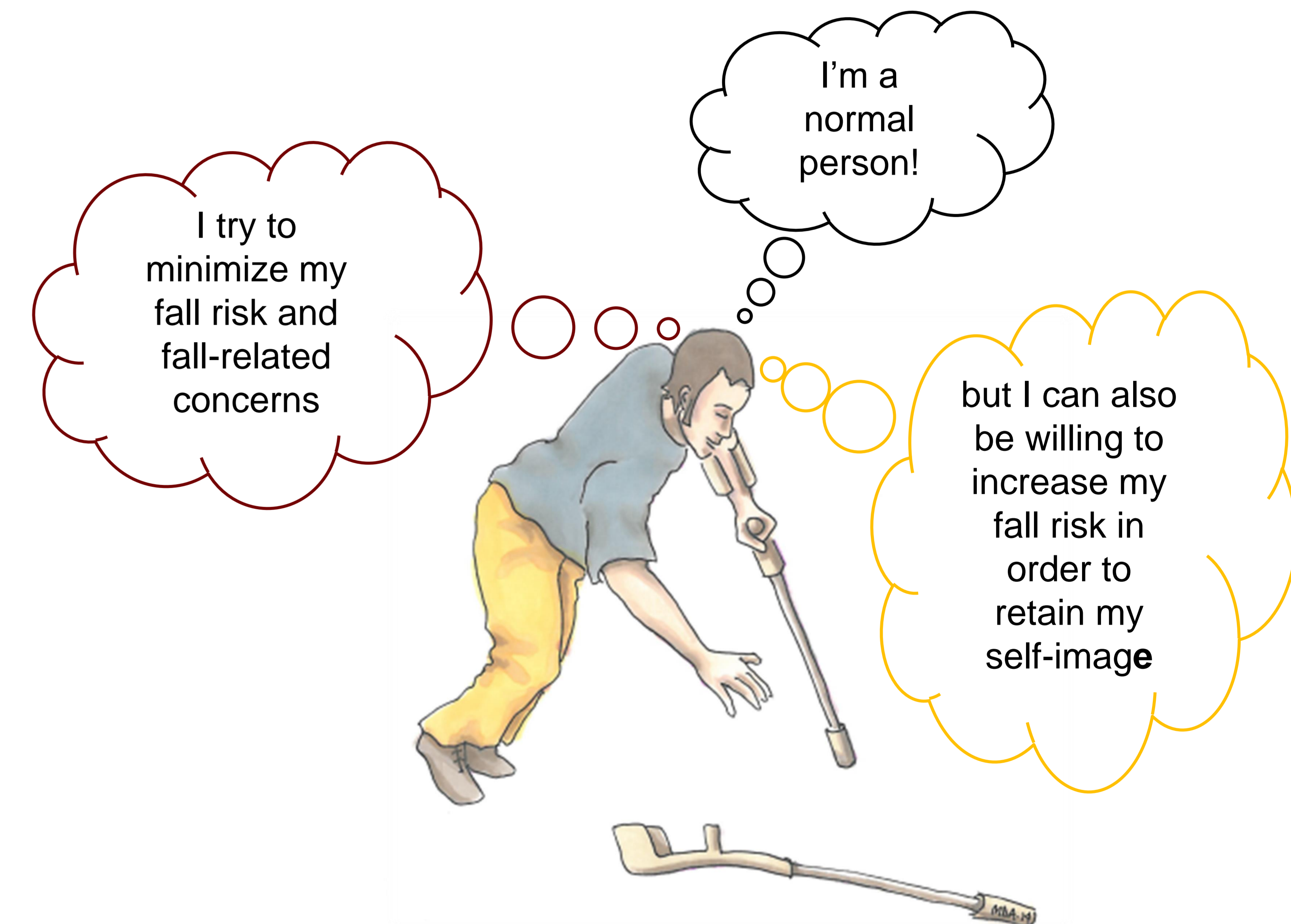
Characteristics of 15 participants

Male/female	10/5
Age, mean years (SD)	47(18)
Years post injury, median (min-max)	7 (2-34)
Injury level:	
Cervical	8
Thoracic	3
Lumbar	4
Completeness of injury	
AIS C / AIS D	2/13
Injury mechanism	
Sport	3
Traffic	8
Fall	3
Other	1

RESULTS

Falls challenged the participations' identity and self-image as normal. The perception of falls, fall-risk, fall-related injuries and consequences of falling seemed to be based on both minimizing fall risk as well as a willingness to increase fall risk in order to maintain an identity as normal.

All informants expressed some conditional fall-related concerns, and a few experienced concerns limiting activities and participation in society.



SCIP
FALLS
STUDY

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