

Long-Term Health and Quality of Life Outcomes Following War-Related Traumatic Lower-Limb Amputation; A Study on Community Re-Integrated Army Veterans in Sri Lanka

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Abstract : Background: Civil war in Sri Lanka ended a decade ago, leaving thousands of army veterans permanently disabled following lower-limb amputations. Quantifying long-term functional health and psychological wellbeing will inform the development of tailored home-based rehabilitation intervention. Objectives: To assess the long-term health and quality of life of Sri Lankan soldiers with traumatic lower-limb amputation. Methods and Materials: A comparative cross-sectional study was conducted in five districts of Sri Lanka. Using stratified random sample technique, two groups of 85 participants were selected; group 1, community re-integrated male army veterans with unilateral lower-limb amputation, and group 2, age and sex matched normal healthy individuals. Long-term health and quality of life (QoL) outcomes were assessed and compared between the two groups using self-administered Short-Form Health Survey-36 questionnaire (SF-36) previously validated for use in Sri Lanka. Results: Group 1 were active prosthetic users who had undergone amputation > ten years ago (Mean±SD: 21.7±5.9). The most prevalent comorbidities for group 1 and 2 were hypertension and diabetes (22.4% and 30.6% and 9.4% and 9.8%, respectively). In group 1, injury-associated long-term health outcomes included knee osteoarthritis (18.8%), knee pain (20.0%), and back pain (69.4%). Scores of physical health and psychological wellbeing were 53.1 (IQR 64.4- 43.8) and 63.5 (IQR 73.3- 51.4) for each group, respectively. Scores revealed the highest QoL related to social functioning (75 (IQR 87.5- 62.5)) and the poorest aspects of QoL related to general health (40 (IQR 50- 35)). Prevalence of comorbidities was significantly higher, and QoL outcomes were significantly lower among soldiers compared to normal healthy individuals ($p<0.05$). Conclusion: Higher prevalence of comorbidities, poor physical health, and lower QoL outcomes were more prevalent in soldiers with lower-limb amputation when compared to healthy counterparts.

Keywords : community-based, disability, health outcomes, quality of life, soldiers

Conference Title : ICPTR 2022 : International Conference on Physical Therapy Rehabilitation

Conference Location : Melbourne, Australia

Conference Dates : February 07-08, 2022