

The Biopsychosocial Effects of Amputation on Transtibial Amputees in Kwazulu-Natal

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Abstract : Background: A myriad of physical, psychosocial, and environmental sequelae are associated with limb loss. However, there is a paucity of empirical South African data, which focuses on these sequelae, how they interface with the amputee's quality of life as well as the challenges they experience following amputation. Objective: This study sought to explore the biopsychosocial effects of amputation and how amputation affected the quality of life of transtibial amputees. Setting: Participants were recruited from a medical facility, under the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health in South Africa. Methods: A qualitative approach guided this study. Data was collected using one-on-one interviews with 14 unilateral transtibial amputees. Data was analysed thematically. Results: Five broad themes emerged from the inquiry, which captured amputees' experiences of phantom limb pain, body image disturbances, and their challenges related to adapting to daily activities. Participants also expressed the salience of familial support as well as the importance of psychological interventions to cope. Conclusion: The findings suggested that support networks and professional psychological intervention are imperative in facilitating successful adjustment to the amputation experience. Raising awareness of limb loss in both, rural and urban settings may help reduce the stigma attached to it. Contribution: Quality of life comprises several domains, namely physical, psychological, environmental, and social albeit limited local and international data exists regarding the environmental and social effects. This study brought to the fore the positive and negative effects of amputation in each domain, as well as various strategies that facilitate successful adjustment to amputation.

Keywords : amputation, quality of life, biopsychosocial, phantom limb pain, body image, support

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