

The Optimization of Sexual Health Resource Information and Services for Persons with Spinal Cord Injury

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Abstract : Following spinal cord injury (SCI), many individuals experience anxiety in adjusting to their lives, and its impacts on their sexuality. Research has demonstrated that regaining sexual function is a very high priority for individuals with SCI. Despite this, sexual health is one of the least likely areas of focus in rehabilitating individuals with SCI. There is currently a considerable gap in appropriate education and resources that address sexual health concerns and needs of people with spinal cord injury. Furthermore, the determinants of sexual health in individuals with SCI are poorly understood and thus poorly addressed. The purpose of this study was to improve current practices by informing a service delivery model that rehabilitation centers can adopt for appropriate delivery of their services. Methodology: We utilized qualitative methods in the form of a semi-structured interview containing open-ended questions to assess 1) sexual health concerns, 2) helpful strategies in current resources, 3) unhelpful strategies in current resources, and 4) Barriers to obtaining sexual health information. In addition to the interviews, participants completed surveys to identify socio-demographic factors. Data gathered was coded and evaluated for emerging themes and subthemes through a 'code-recode' technique. Results: We have identified several robust themes that are important for SCI sexual health resource development. Through analysis of these themes and their subthemes, several important concepts have emerged that could provide agencies with helpful strategies for providing sexual health resources. Some of the important considerations are that services be; anonymous, accessible, frequent, affordable, mandatory, casual and supported by peers. Implications: By incorporating the perspectives of individuals with SCI, the finding from this study can be used to develop appropriate sexual health services and improve access to information through tailored needs based program development.

Keywords : spinal cord injury, sexual health, determinants of health, resource development

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