



## Depression and spinal cord injury (SCI)

### What is the study about?

Research has been devoted to both physical and mental health outcomes after spinal cord injury (SCI). Several studies have identified rates of depression after SCI with estimates ranging widely from 10% to over 40%. Our purpose was to enhance the understanding of depressive symptoms after SCI by assessing racial-ethnic differences and other factors, including health behaviors, employment, fatigue, and pain interfering with daily life.

### Who participated and how was the study conducted?

There were a total of 1,063 participants who were 18 years or older and at least 1 year post injury. Participants were identified from collaborating institutions from different regions of the USA (Southeastern, Mountain, and Western). Self-report data were collected.

### What did the study find?

Fatigue, pain that interfered with a participant's day-to-day activities, and binge drinking were all related to more depressive symptoms. On the other hand, being employed was associated with fewer depressive symptoms. Hispanics had a lower risk of depressive symptoms than non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks.

### Implications and/or recommendations?

This study indicates the need to monitor for depressive symptoms among people with SCI. Screening for use of depressive symptoms during routine follow-ups should be a priority for healthcare professionals, especially if the individual has pain which is interfering with daily activities. Individuals with SCI should be aware of the signs and symptoms of depression. Two of the major signs of depression are a loss of interest or pleasure in doing things, and feeling down, depressed, or hopeless. Although some ups and downs are part of normal life, having one or both of these symptoms, along with other issues like sleep loss, difficulty concentrating, or appetite change, suggest that it is time to talk to a healthcare professional.

#### Reference:

Cao, Y., Li, C., Gregory, A., Charlifue, S., & Krause, J.S. (2017). Depressive symptomatology after spinal cord injury: A multi-center investigation of multiple racial-ethnic groups. *The Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine*, 40, 85-92.

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