



Protective behaviors and pressure ulcers among those with spinal cord injury

What is the study about?

Spinal cord injury (SCI) results in a number of changes that may place people at higher risk for pressure ulcers. A pressure ulcer is defined as injury to the skin or underlying tissue, commonly over a bony prominence, as a result of pressure and/or shear. Roughly 32–48% of persons with chronic SCI report having a pressure ulcer in the past year, and 16–24% report having a pressure ulcer at any given time. Chronic SCI simply means people who are living with SCI in the years and decades after its onset. A large portion of research uses participants who were injured recently, so it is also important to study outcomes among those who have lived a longer time with SCI. Our purpose was to look at health behaviors that may help people to prevent pressure ulcers.

Who participated and how was the study conducted?

There were 1871 participants who were recruited from a large specialty hospital in the Southeastern USA. The inclusion criteria of this study were as follows: traumatic SCI (i.e. resulted from an injury or event, not a disease process), at least 1 year since SCI onset, 18 years of age or older, and having some physical issues from SCI (i.e. although some recovery may have occurred, the recovery was not complete). Participants averaged 15.9 years since SCI onset and were average of 48.3 years of age. Participants completed a self-report assessment.

What did the study find?

We found that people who engage in healthy behaviors, such as exercise, good diet, an active lifestyle were less likely to have pressure ulcers, suggesting that these activities may help to prevent pressure ulcers from occurring. People who were generally active doing recreational activities were also less likely to develop pressure ulcers. Participants who were African American, had higher injury levels (i.e., more severe SCI), and had longer time since SCI had more challenges in terms of preventing pressure ulcers.

Implications and/or recommendations?

This study suggests the need to enhance healthy behaviors to prevent adverse pressure ulcer outcomes, especially among people who are African American, have longer time since SCI, and have higher level of SCI. These findings will be helpful for clinicians and rehabilitation professionals to promote healthy living behaviors for their patients. Future studies are needed to test the relationship between developing risk behaviors and pressure ulcer outcomes using a similar structural approach. We then will have a better

understanding of the influence of health behaviors (both risk behaviors and protective behaviors) on pressure ulcers.

Reference:

Li C., Dipiro N.D., Krause J. (2017) A latent structural equation model of protective behaviors and pressure ulcer outcomes among people living with spinal cord injury. *Spinal Cord*. 2017, 55,135-140.

This article contains full references to all pertinent information, including details of previous research by other investigators, instruments used, and more detailed findings.

The contents of this research brief were developed under grants from the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living, NIDILRR grant numbers 90RT5003 and 90DP0098. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Health and Human Services, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Contributors to this research brief include Chao Li, Nicole DiPiro, James S. Krause, Jameka Rembert, and Melinda Jarnecke.