Being physically active after spinal cord injury (SCI):
Self-reported Exercise Regimens from Community-dwelling Adults

Matthew E. Kehn, BA1; Thilo Kroll, PhD2
1National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH), Washington, DC
2University of Dundee, Alliance for Self Care Research. School of Nursing & Midwifery, Scotland, UK

Purpose
To detail the exercise regimens of community-dwelling adults with SCI and identify associated health characteristics with their exercise-active lifestyle.

Background/Significance
People with mobility impairments are more likely to live a sedentary lifestyle, putting them at greater risk for a variety of adverse health conditions.

Subjects:
Persons with a spinal cord injury.

Methods
Using convenience and snowball sampling, individuals with SCI (N=627) from across the U.S. completed a self-reported mail-in survey. Collected information included:
- Exercise status
- Exercise activities (aerobic, strengthening and flexibility), including their intensity, frequency and duration
- Logistics of exercise regimen (facility versus home exercise)
- Incidence of chronic and secondary conditions
- Health risk behaviors
- Incidence of pressure sores
- Chronic pain
- Functional capacity
- Therapy (Physical, occupational, speech, therapeutic)
- Community integration
- Perceived exercise self-efficacy
- Demographic information

Data Analysis:
SPSS v. 14.0; descriptive statistics, bi-variate analysis

Results
Subjects:
Non-Exercisers (N=188)
Exercisers (N=438)

"We identify an "exerciser" as someone who reported exercise, which we left undefined, "at home", "outside the home" or "at home and outside the home". A "non-exerciser" is someone who reported no physical activity.

Conclusions
- Contrary to public opinion, the majority of people with SCI in our sample view themselves as exercise active.
- Completeness of injury, age of injury and income proved to be significant predictors of exercise status.
- Perceived self-efficacy (the confidence to be exercise active with an SCI) is significantly higher among exercise active people with SCI and is likely an important moderator of exercise engagement.
- Incidence of certain secondary conditions is significantly lower among adults with SCI who exercise when compared to those who do not.
- Self identified exercisers show higher therapy utilization rates and great functional capability.

Participants were asked to rate the level of help needed for a variety of daily activities. The 5-point scale ranged from needing help "none of the time" to "all of the time". The differences between the average rates reported by "exercisers" versus "non-exercisers" were statistically significant (p < .05) with "exercisers" reporting greater levels of functional capacity. The following graph outlines the percent of participants who required help "most of the time" or "all of the time".

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