

Medical complications after spinal cord injury: identification and management

Abstract: This is a self-directed learning module that reviews medical complications associated with spinal cord injury (SCI). It is part of a chapter on SCI medicine in the Self-Directed Physiatric Educational Program for practitioners and trainees in physical medicine and rehabilitation. This article includes discussion of common medical complications that impact rehabilitation and long-term follow-up for individuals with SCI. Issues addressed include the rehabilitation approach to SCI individuals with pressure ulcers, unilateral lower-extremity swelling (deep venous thrombosis, heterotopic ossification, fractures), along with the pathophysiology, assessment, and treatment of spasticity, autonomic dysreflexia, orthostatic hypotension, and pain.

Overall Article Objectives: To describe diagnostic and treatment approaches for medical complications common to individuals with SCI.

Key Words: Pain; Pressure ulcers; Rehabilitation; Spasticity; Spinal cord injuries; Venous thrombosis.

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