

Sense of coherence and changes over six years among older adults aging with long-term spinal cord injury

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INTRODUCTION

Sense of Coherence (SOC) infers that people's orientation towards life determines their ability to preserve good health despite external strains, and is therefore an important component in rehabilitation. An understanding of psychological adjustment and changes over time as one ages with long-term spinal cord injury (SCI) is needed to facilitate healthy aging after injury. The aims of this study are to:

I) describe SOC and changes over six years in older adults aging with long-term SCI and

II) investigate how changes in SOC are associated with injury characteristics and changes in sociodemographics and secondary health conditions (bowel and bladder related problems, pain, spasticity).

METHODS

From the initial 123 participants in the Swedish Aging with Spinal Cord Injury Study (SASCIS), 76 individuals (33% women, median age 66 years, median time since injury 30 years, AIS A-D) responded to the 13-item SOC scale (range 13-91) twice with a six-year interval. Multivariable hierarchical regression was used.

RESULTS

The participants rated a strong SOC at both assessments (median 73 and 76.5, respectively) which significantly increased over time. A change from not having a partner to having one was the only significant explanatory factor for a positive change in SOC.

CONCLUSION

Older adults aging with long-term SCI generally maintain a strong ability to understand, handle and being motivated when dealing with stressful events arising in their lives as a result of their SCI. The associations emphasize the importance of the social context for successful adaptation to living with SCI along the aging process.