

Development and preliminary trial of an online vocational program for Australian adults with spinal cord injury

A project developed by a multidisciplinary research team

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The aim of this project was to develop and trial a written information resource for job-seekers with a spinal cord injury or disorder.

Twenty-four job-seekers were recruited for this project. This included adults who were currently unemployed but also those seeking to increase their current work hours. Of these, 16 completed all project activities.

Participants were required to access a 6-module resource, *'Work and SCI'*, online. This resource was purposely developed with consumers and rehabilitation specialists (medicine, occupational therapy, nursing, social work, psychology) to help adults with a physical disability better understand their employment/career goals. Participants also had to complete a survey on study enrolment and 4 weeks thereafter.

Overall, we received favourable comments about the *Work and SCI* resource. Readability and text comprehension were identified as positives. Information quality, links to further information sources, and ease of use were also endorsed: *"very informative, great resources to keep for use, very supportive platform..."*

Suggestions for improvement included the need for additional, anecdotal case studies to illustrate key points and relevance: *"...reading/ hearing of others experiences is very uplifting"*. Positive strategies to change employee and employer attitudes and to make a genuine impact on persistent discrimination and stigma in the workplace were also highlighted.

The results of this trial have since been replicated with a larger group of 48 adults with spinal cord injury, achieving similar positive results.

The research team is now expanding on this work, by developing and evaluating an outpatient vocational counselling service with lead disability provider - Paraquad SA.

Publications

Dorstyn D, Roberts R, Murphy G, Kneebone I, Craig A, Chur-Hansen A, Migliorini C, Potter E, Marshall R, Clark J, Neeson N, Stewart P (2017). Can targeted job-information for adults with spinal cord dysfunction be effectively delivered online? A pilot study, [*The Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine*, 42, 94-101.](#)

Dorstyn D, Roberts R, Murphy G, Craig A, Kneebone I, Stewart S, Chur-Hansen A, Marshall R, Clark J, Migliorini C (2019). Work and SCI: a pilot randomized controlled study of an online resource for job-seekers with spinal cord dysfunction. [*Spinal Cord* 57, 221–228.](#)