

8-1-2024

Transitioning from Inpatient Rehabilitation to Home in Veterans with Spinal Cord Injuries

Alexis Tucci

Nova Southeastern University, allymcqueen@hotmai.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hpd_ot_capstone



Part of the [Occupational Therapy Commons](#)

All rights reserved. This publication is intended for use solely by faculty, students, and staff of Nova Southeastern University. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, now known or later developed, including but not limited to photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author or the publisher.

NSUWorks Citation

Alexis Tucci. 2024. *Transitioning from Inpatient Rehabilitation to Home in Veterans with Spinal Cord Injuries*. Capstone. Nova Southeastern University. Retrieved from NSUWorks, . (142)
https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hpd_ot_capstone/142.

This Entry Level Capstone is brought to you by the Department of Occupational Therapy at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Department of Occupational Therapy Entry-Level Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.



Transitioning from Inpatient Rehabilitation to Home in Veterans with Spinal Cord Injuries

Alexis Tucci, OTD-S
Emily Bertoncini, OTD, OTR/L, CLT
James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital SCI Clinic, Tampa, FL



James A. Haley Veterans Hospitals and Clinics. (n.d.). VA expansion. <https://bit.ly/3oEIX8B>

Introduction

- The purpose of this capstone project was to develop advanced clinical practice skills in the adult population with spinal cord injury (SCI), Multiple Sclerosis (MS), and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).
- Developed a Transitional Guide, incorporating information and recourses based on themes identified from the literature and needs assessment, aimed to improve the transition from inpatient rehabilitation to home in Veterans with spinal cord injury (SCI).

Capstone Site Description

- James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital (JAHVH) is a level 1a facility in Tampa and one of the nation’s largest and most complex integrated medical facilities in the Veterans Health Administration.
- 1 of 5 Polytrauma Centers within the VA system.
- One of few locations with a dedicated ventilation unit for long term care located in the 100 bed SCI Center.
- JAHVH is a teaching hospital with a variety of specialties, including SCI.
- The ALS interdisciplinary team is made up of 23 providers providing telemedicine and in-person services.

Summary of Needs Assessment

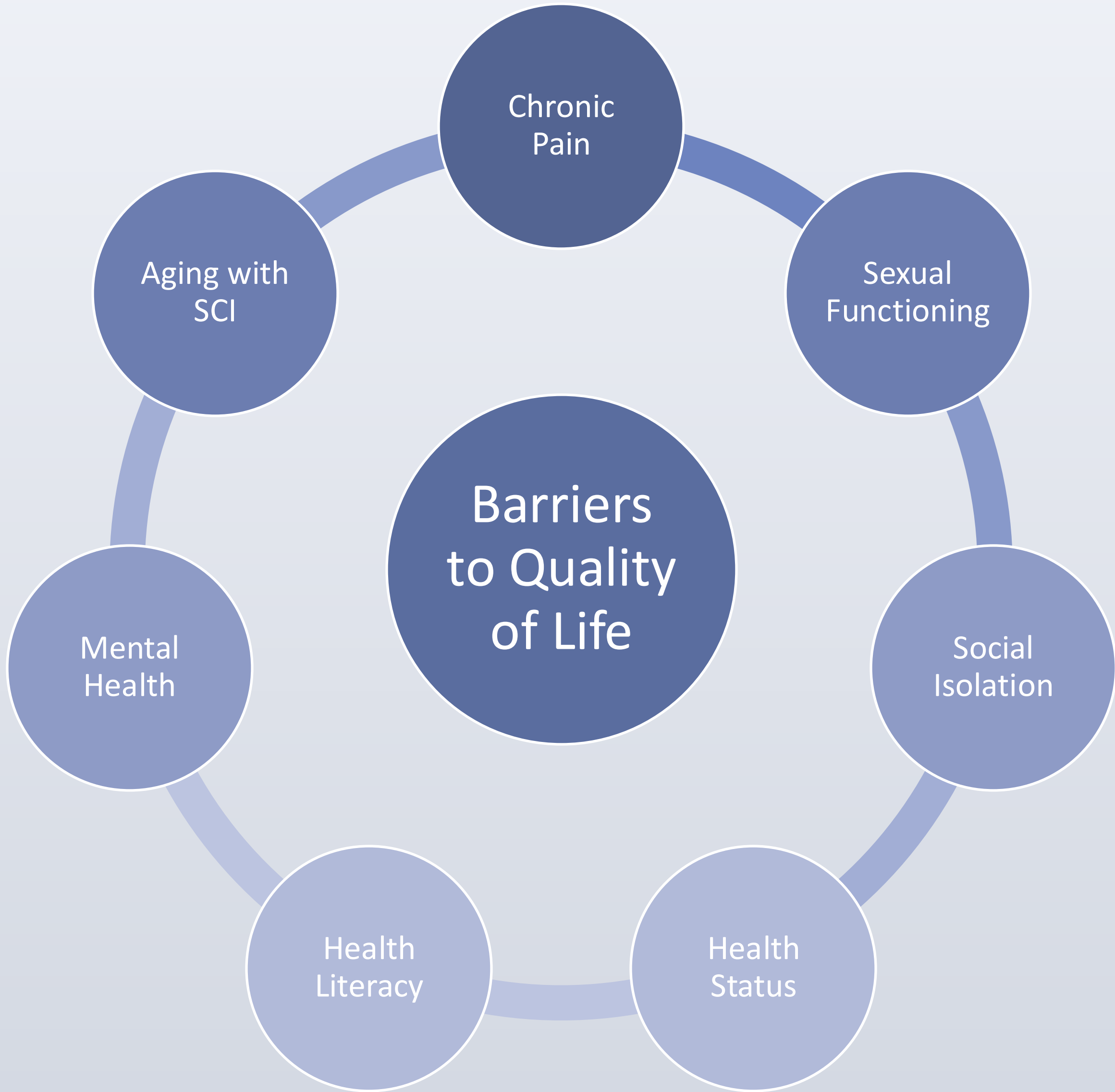
- The literature suggest that persons with SCI, particularly Veterans, face numerous physical, mental, emotional, and social challenges when transitioning from inpatient rehab to home that impact their independence and quality of life.
- Common themes obtained from interviews with patients and service providers, along with the literature, determined the most appropriate information to include in the Transitional Guide.



Image from Microsoft PowerPoint 365

Literature Review Summary

- Individuals with SCI have difficulty maintaining independence as they age with SCI due to physical changes.
- While mental health concerns, PTSD, and risk of suicide are greater in Veterans, SCI-specific evidence-based research regarding mental health treatments is lacking in this population.
- Many Veterans have difficulty navigating the VA health system, are discouraged by long wait times, or have difficulty accessing VA facilities, which deters them from receiving services that may benefit their health and independence.
- Individuals with SCI often feel overwhelmed and unprepared to manage their complex health needs when discharged home.
- Falls are highly prevalent in this population due to secondary health complications and a decline in physical health.
- Despite the desire to remain active in the community and socially, persons with SCI often experience social isolation due to difficulty managing secondary health conditions, accessibility concerns in the community, lack of peer support, and mental health concerns.
- Sexual functioning is crucial to quality of life, but education regarding this topic is often overlooked by healthcare providers.
- Chronic pain is evident in 37-84% of persons with SCI. However, ¼ remain untreated and many feel dissatisfied with the available treatments for pain, leading to decreased participation in social, leisure, and daily activities.



Capstone Project Description & Outcomes

- To address the key themes and barriers identified in my literature review, I developed a Guide for Transition. This guide aims to support veterans transitioning home from the SCI inpatient unit to enhance their quality of life. The topics included are listed below.
- The guide contains a structured approach to helping patients organize their thoughts during their inpatient stay and upon discharge. It includes VA and community resources, considerations, education, and QR codes linking to helpful videos and websites to address the identified needs.

ADLs	IADLS	Transfers & Mobility	Mental & Emotional Health	Sexuality
Pain Management	Fall Prevention	Peer & Community Groups	Employment & Volunteering	Recreation & Sports
Grants & Funding	Health Management	Aging with SCI	Specialty Appointments & Reminder Handouts	Daily Planner

Capstone Goals Achieved

1. Created and implemented a survey to identify the barriers to quality of life that Veterans with SCI encounter after discharge.
2. Surveyed various VA departments involved in SCI care to identify available resources that many enhance Veterans with SCI quality of life and occupational engagement during and after their stay.
3. Developed a transitional guide to support veterans as they move from the SCI inpatient unit to home, aiming to enhance their quality of life.
4. Assisted with evaluation and treatment of Veterans with SCI to advance my clinical practice skills and knowledge regarding this population.

Implications for OT Practice

- OTs must support open dialogue regarding transitional challenges and provide support in the areas that are most meaningful to the individual.
- OTs have the skills and knowledge to educate other healthcare professionals on initiating discussions about challenging topics such as sexual functioning and pain management.
- Continued opportunities for peer support to share experiences are critical in promoting mental health and social connectedness.
- Consider implementing a specialized team to explore the benefit of a gradual discharge to bridge the gap between the SCI unit and the home environment.



Image from Microsoft PowerPoint 365

References & Acknowledgements

Thank you to my mentor, Dr. Bertoncini, and the SCI team for their continued support, guidance, and expertise throughout my capstone experience. I would also like to acknowledge the patients and healthcare providers who allowed me to interview them and learn from their stories. Lastly, thank you to Dr. Christina Kane and Dr. Alicia Kopp for their invaluable assistance in ensuring the successful completion of my doctoral capstone. I am eternally grateful for the positive impact each of you has had on my journey to becoming an OT.

References available upon request