Narrative Chronology of Athletic Identity (AI), Sport Participation, and Spinal Cord Injury (SCI): Two Female Perspectives
Lauren Audick, OTS Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Background

- AI and team sport participation are indicated to assist with adjustment after SCI and foster a higher quality of life through physical and psychological benefits.  
- Narratives regarding AI among individuals who experienced a long term physical disability describe the loss of AI, some redeveloped AI over a lengthy time.
- There is a significant lack of research related to women with disabilities; similar trend exists in AI SCI research.

Research Aim

To investigate how female athletes who experienced a SCI describe athletic identity over the course of their lifetime.

Methods

- Qualitative, phenomenological study
- Purposive convenience sampling
- 2 adult female athletes who experienced SCI
- Semi-structured interviews; Narrative analysis

Prior motivations for sports, SCI prognosis can influence: present/future oriented goals, openness to adapted sports

Two nuances identified: AI decreased after injury but was not "lost"; evidence of quick, partial redevelopment of AI

Noted AI supports: motivation favoring therapeutic effects; exposure to adapted sports during inpatient rehab; peer role model; high self-efficacy; accessibility

Tailor adapted sport discussions/experiences to acknowledge client narrative about prior sports, AI, and current goals

Remove barriers; Increase self-efficacy through adapted sport experiences; Foster agency in preparation for future barriers

Further explore trends in AI and sport participation after injury including any notable differences related to demographics, diagnosis, prognosis, patient goals

Synthesize interdisciplinary research to generate a shared foundation of knowledge to support initiation or continuation of AI after SCI

References: