

An Analysis of Pain Following Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury among Adults in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to analyse on pain following traumatic spinal cord injury, its prevalence, the types of pain present, the common treatments used and their perceived effectiveness in the management of these reported pain types. A cross sectional study was carried out at St Giles Rehabilitation Centre and from members of the Spinal Injuries Association of Zimbabwe (SIAZ). A researcher-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from 24 participants with traumatic spinal cord injury. The questionnaire elicited information on demographic data, pain characteristics and the perceived effectiveness of the common treatments used.

Among the 24 participants in the study, 17 were males (70.8%) and 7 were females (29.2%). Pain prevalence was 79.2% among the study participants and approximately a fifth (21.03%) of all participants rated their pain as severe. Eight (33.3%) of the participants had neuropathic pain while 11 (45.8%) had both nociceptive and neuropathic pain types. However, no association was found between sex, age, time post injury when tested against the presence of pain ($p > 0.05$). Weather changes aggravated almost every type of pain reported. Both pharmacological and non-pharmacological methods were used to manage the pain but their perceived effectiveness was rated as low. The majority of the traumatic spinal cord injured people experienced some pain and this pain was severe in a fifth of all participants. Pain significantly affected their quality of life. Physiotherapists and other medical professionals need to be aware of this and should employ pain reducing modalities and empathy when dealing with these patients.