

(15) Partner Support in Severe Long-Term Spinal Cord Injury

*Dvorit Gilad-Smolinsky
School of Social Work*

This study focused on analysis of partner support as a resource for coping with long-term disability for couples in which the male partner has sustained spinal cord injury and is confined to a wheelchair. Data were collected from 130 couples. In 65 couples the man was a disabled Israel Defense Forces veteran who sustained spinal cord injury during service and was confined to a wheelchair, at least ten years after injury. The comparison group consisted of 65 couples at a comparable stage in life, in which the man was not disabled. Partner support questionnaire developed for the current study to examine specific qualities of mutually supportive relationships. The questionnaire was based on the theoretical work premise of Pierce et al. (1996), on in-depth interviews about mutual support with couples living with and without disabilities (Cotrana, 1994), and on Guttman's (1968) mapping sentences. The mapping sentence serves here as a definitional framework of partner support relations and structures the content of the components of support relations according to its various facets, following Guttman's Facet Theory. Structural analysis of the partner support questionnaire was conducted using Guttman's Smallest Space Analysis (SSA) method. Partner support was examined with reference to the psychological well-being of both partners, the nature of the relationship, the attitude toward the stress of living with disability, and the quality of marriage. This poster focused on topics related to structural analysis of the partner support that includes comparison between the groups. The results show differences between the study groups in the support schema, the availability of support, its conduct, and its sources.

Keywords: Spinal cord injury; Partner support relationship.