PSYCHOSOCIAL NEWS:
The SSCIS Psychosocial Strategy for People with a Spinal Cord Injury Newsletter

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The Social Worker as Coach – Life beyond Spinal cord injury. By B. Berelowitz

Can you be both a Social Worker and a Coach?

I will briefly highlight that working as both a Social Worker and a coach in a spinal unit has afforded me the opportunity to integrate my Social Work skills and coaching techniques while working with people who have acquired a spinal cord injury.

The trauma of a spinal cord injury impacts on the entire family who all have to cope with adjustment and loss on multiple levels. A major task for any Social Worker is to help strengthen a person’s capacity to be self-sufficient and manage as independently as possible. Social Workers also aim to facilitate life enhancing and transformational experiences for the newly injured person.

Like Social Work, coaching aims to empower and develop a person’s confidence. However, coaching strongly focusses on eliciting the person’s internal values and skills together with the questioning techniques of coaching and the coaching tools enable encouraging others in a non-judgemental way. These values and skills together with the questioning techniques of coaching and the coaching tools enable deeper connection when motivating and communicating with others. This provides our newly injured persons an opportunity to creatively think for themselves when problem solving around creating a different and new life with a SCI.

Combining coaching skills and Social Work practice has offered insights, created opportunities, highlighted challenges and demonstrated experiences which will be showcased and shared in the future ………watch this space! Beverley works in Spinal Pressure Care Clinic, Prince of Wales Hospital.

ENHANCING PSYCHOSOCIAL SKILLS FOR THOSE WORKING IN SCI – A PILOT WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE. A. Dezarnaulds and H. Tonkin.


A new resource, The Emotional Well-being and SCI Tool-kit, aims to support one of the Psychosocial (PS) Strategy objectives, that is to improve psychosocial assessment, management, knowledge and skills of those working in SCI. The tool-kit was incorporated into a psychosocial education workshop pilot as part of the Royal North Shore Hospital Spinal Core Course with an emphasis on developing awareness, knowledge and skills within a professional role for those working in SCI.

To determine the utility of the workshop, 27 nursing and allied health staff attending the course participated in education about psychosocial and adjustment issues. In small groups, they used case discussion and identified psychosocial (PS) issues in response to questions using the tool-kit and were asked to determine a course of action and issues for management. Participants completed a pre and post evaluation questionnaire covering: their definition of/understanding of PS issues; relevance to their role, whether it was considered “their business”, knowledge of PS issues, knowledge and use of PS resources, confidence in dealing with PS issues, barriers to engaging with individuals around PS issues and how PS skills training might assist work practice.

Ninety-six percent of the participants believed that PS issues were extremely relevant to both their service and their role. Only 43% rated their knowledge as satisfactory. The majority reported limited confidence addressing PS issues, with only 18% being very confident. In terms of drivers of practice, 33% of staff from all disciplines identified attitudinal barriers, expressing the belief that either the other staff trained in dealing with mental health issues (SW, psychologists) or the unit staff in general did not believe that dealing with PS issues was either appropriate or “their business”. Other barriers included time constraints, a lack of experience and confidence, with 33% feeling that there were no barriers. Participants reported that PS skills training would assist with better guidance and care, increased family involvement, better confidence and improved ability to explore issues with clients. The toolkit and training were considered useful and appropriate.

Psychosocial issues for individuals with a SCI remain at the centre of rehabilitation practice. This workshop along with the educational resource highlights its utility for facilitating a better understanding of PS issues for staff working with SCI. However, while there is a desire for a better understanding, increased confidence and competence, both time and attitudes by other staff and services continue to be perceived as barriers to practice change.

The role of the psychosocial strategy is to assist you in gaining the knowledge and skills you need to effectively support the psychosocial wellbeing of people with SCI.

You know and understand what works for you in your practice setting, so your thoughts and ideas can make a difference.

If you have any ideas on what could assist you in your practice, if you would like to be further involved in specific working groups or have any comments about the strategy, your input is welcome! Please contact your representative on the Steering Group to feedback your thoughts and ideas, or contact the Chair of the Steering Group directly.

IN SIDE T H IS I SSU E:

SOCIAL WORKER AT A LIFE COACH – LIFE BEYOND SCI
BY BEVERLEY BERELOWITZ

ENHANCING PSYCHOSOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING – PILOT WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE
H. TONKIN &

WHO’S WHO ON THE STEERING GROUP

2014 STEERING COMMITTEE PROJECTS

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY – ANZCOS 2015
For further information on the work of the Psychosocial Strategy Steering Group contact Annalisa Dezarnaulds via email: annalisa.dezarnaulds@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au

Where you can download the Guide for Health Professionals on the Psychosocial Care of People with SCI and the Directory of Information

Do you need something more?
For further resources on psychosocial aspects of SCI visit http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/networks/spinal-cord-injury/resources

The SSCIS Psychosocial Steering Committee Update

The SSCIS Psychosocial Steering Committee oversees the implementation of the SSCIS Psychosocial Strategy, and all units and community organizations are invited to send a representative. Current representatives include:

- Annalisa Dezarnaulds (Chair), Clinical Psychologist, SIU, POWH (annalisa.dezarnaulds@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au)
- James Middleton, Director, SSCIS (james.middleton@sydney.edu.au)
- Catherine Ephraums, Clinical Psychologist, SCIU, Royal Rehab
- Alex Ommannney, Social Worker Spinal Outreach Service, Royal Rehab
- Neil McKinnon, Manager, Lifetime Care Support Authority (LTCSA)
- Michael Magro, Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA)
- David Coren, Peer Support Officer, ParaQuad NSW
- Ralf Ilchef, Consultation Liaison Psychiatrist, RNSH
- Helen Tonkin, Social Work, RNSH
- Jacqueline Smith, Clinical Psychologist, Hunter Spinal Cord Injury Service
- Leah Ogden Regional Officer, Illawarra, SCIA

We farewell Leah and welcome Leanne Cowan, SCIA’s Regional Services Manager

2014 Update of the PS Steering Committee Projects

- The Emotional Well-being and SCI Tool-kit, in its 14th draft version will soon be ready for distribution to trial in several inpatient and outpatient settings. This desk top resource with side tabs nominating various psychosocial presentations, also incorporates brief clinical assessment screening tools, helpful tips, and the do and don’ts of good psychosocial management. This tool-kit has been developed to help clinicians use an evidence-based approach to assessment and management of psychosocial issues by providing them with a quick and easy set of measures that can easily be scored and interpreted. After the trial we hope to roll out its use among all SCI services in the NSW.

- A prospective study of the occurrence of mental disorders and co-morbidities following spinal cord injury. A.Craig, K. Nicholson Perry, R.Guest, Y.Tran, A.Dezarnaulds, A.Hales, C.Ephraums, J.Middleton. The findings of this paper indicate that SCI has a substantial negative impact on mental health that does not change over time, suggesting that increased resources should be invested into improving the mental health of adults with SCI.


- A 3 hour pilot workshop titled Enhancing Psychosocial skills training for those working in SCI was presented during the Royal North Shore Hospital Spinal Core Course with an emphasis on developing awareness, knowledge and skills within a professional role for those working in spinal injury.

- ANZSCOS 2014 Free Papers - Findings of the evaluation of this pilot Psychosocial skills training workshop was presented.


Date for your diary

ANZSCOS November 25-27 2015
A New Beginning: Perth, Western Australia

For information: http://www.anzscos2015.com

The Steering Committee wish you a very Merry Christmas and hope you enjoy your time with family and friends during the festive season. We look forward to a productive time for 2015.