

# OUTCOMES OF PEER MENTORSHIP FOR MENTEES LIVING WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY

PERSPECTIVES FROM MEMBERS OF CANADIAN COMMUNITY-BASED SCI ORGANIZATIONS

## Background



Community-based peer support/mentorship programs for people living with spinal cord injury (SCI) are widely available across Canada.



### Purpose

To obtain an in-depth understanding of outcomes of peer support/mentorship programs.

## Method



**36 adults were interviewed**

from 4 provincial SCI organizations (Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Ontario).

Peer mentors (providing mentorship)  
Peer mentees (receiving mentorship)  
Family members of mentees  
Organizational Staff



## Findings

Thirteen outcomes have been identified:

“If they can get to that point where they don't need you anymore, that's a good thing - if they're doing well.”

Adam (Mentor)



Independences/  
Self reliance



Emotional/  
Psychological

“Absolutely. I do feel like it's had a positive impact. Even in the last year, he's even been more open. Where I thought he was as open as he could be before, it's almost like he's even more open now and more comfortable.”

Natalie (Family)



Employment



Mobility



Loneliness and  
Isolation



Self-confidence



Sport Engagement



Housing/  
Finance



Medical  
Field



Belonging

“Well, when a friendly face wheels up to your bedside and says, "Hello, I'm Sarah from a community-based organization, how are you doing?" I mean, you're desperate for visitors anyway when you're lying there. So a visitor who's been where you've been, it was just as I said, profound.”

Mary (Mentee)



Understanding



Knowledge



Inspiration/  
Hope

“But at this stage, he was married, had kids, he was working, and he was still continuing to mentor other people. So, he never gave up in life. He worked hard. He was on a power chair and had no movement. He could control everything with his mouth on that chair. That was very inspiring.”

Emily (Mentee)

**Mutual outcomes for mentees and mentors**

- Collective Benefit
- Problem Solving Skills
- Community Building

- No Negatives
- Lack of Connection
- Shared Learning

“And you're learning from their experience just as much as they're learning from you. If I can learn something from them, that's worth it.”

David (Mentee)

## Conclusions

Community-based peer support/mentorship programs can lead to positive outcomes for mentees.

SCI organizations may consider measuring these outcomes to assess the positive impact of their peer support/mentorship programs.

### Reference:

Sweet, S. N., Hennig, L., Shi, Z., Clarke, T., Flaro, H., Hawley, S., Schaefer, L., & Gainforth, H. L. (2021). Outcomes of peer mentorship for people living with spinal cord injury: perspectives from members of Canadian community-based SCI organizations. *Spinal cord*, 59(12), 1301-1308. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41393-021-00725-2>



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada



Theories and Interventions in  
Exercise and Health Psychology  
(TIE) Laboratory



Centre de recherche  
interdisciplinaire  
en réadaptation



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



McGill



Spinal Cord Injury BC



ABILITY  
NEW BRUNSWICK



CAPACITÉ  
NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK



SPINAL CORD INJURY ONTARIO  
LÉSIONS MÉDULLAIRES ONTARIO



Spinal Cord Injury Alberta  
Lésions Médullaires Alberta