

# Participation following traumatic brain injury in regional, rural and remote NSW

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## Background

'Participation' refers to involvement in life activities, from work and study through to recreation and socialising. Participation is the end goal of most rehabilitation, yet relatively little is known about the participation of people living regional, rural and remote areas following traumatic brain injury (TBI).

## Method

This paper will present part of the findings of a two year state-wide project on participation following TBI amongst people living in non-metropolitan regions of NSW. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to describe participation of people following TBI rehabilitation. In the quantitative phase, all eight rural brain injury units in NSW were involved in the recruitment and survey of clients who fitted the inclusion criteria. The survey collected demographic data on all participants, in addition to determining each participant's level of self-efficacy, depression and anxiety, and degree of participation as measured by the Participation Objective, Participation Subjective measure (POPS). The second phase of the research involved in-depth interviews, with 32 participants taken from the larger sample. These interviews focused on collecting narrative stories of participation and the impact of TBI.

## Results

This paper presents a summary of the results of the quantitative phase of the research, in which comparisons and correlations will be made between various factors that impact on participation, including gender, age, severity of injury, self-efficacy, anxiety/depression, and employment. However, the main focus of this presentation will be on the participants' stories, highlighting the complexities of their lives, the multiple issues relating to satisfactory participation and their suggestions for the delivery of appropriate health and social services.

## Implications for clinical practice

Given that participation is a concept of importance to those working in rehabilitation, the implications of our findings will have wide ranging interest. Our research indicates that to enhance the satisfaction with participation of people with TBI who live in regional, rural and remote areas, it is necessary to re-think our rehabilitation programs, to ensure that the services provided are family-centred and needs-led, that health professionals become advocates, and that effective support networks are established. It is essential that health professionals work in collaboration with people with a TBI and their families/friends, and that this partnership is maintained for an indefinite period, as many people take years to be satisfied with their level of participation.

## Presenter

### Michael Curtin

Michael Curtin has been the course coordinator for the occupational therapy program since May 2005. Prior to this he has worked as an occupational therapist with children and adults in Australia, Botswana and England. He enjoys working at Charles Sturt University and engaging in the challenge of preparing students to work in regional, rural and remote areas and to participate in traditional and non-traditional areas of practice. Michael's research interests centres on disability narratives. Currently he is learning from the narrative of children and adults living in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia, who also have a brain injury.

