

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) and Pregnancy Discussion: Instructor's Guide

Jeremy French-Lawyer, MPH, CHES

The goal of the activity is to discuss patient care for women with SCI who are pregnant or would like to become pregnant.

Estimated Time: 40 minutes

Recommended Group Size: <12 medical students

Outcome Objectives:

1. Students will recognize the importance of parenthood to people with disability.
2. Students will be able to identify ways in which SCI may impact pregnancy.
3. Students will be able to describe strategies that can help ensure women with SCI have a safe pregnancy and delivery.
4. Students will understand that people with disability often have many of the same health care needs as their other patients.

Potential Integration Points

Course Topics: Family Medicine, Communication Skills, OB/GYN, Health Care Needs of Medically Underserved Populations, Health Disparities, Professionalism, Interprofessional Education, Neurology

Physician Competencies Reference Set (PCRS) Domains: Patient Care, Interpersonal and Communication Skills, Professionalism, Systems-Based Practice, Interprofessional Collaboration

Physician Competencies Reference Set (PCRS) Competencies:

- 1.6 Develop and carry out patient management plans.
- 1.5 Make informed decisions about diagnostic and therapeutic interventions based on patient information and preferences, up-to-date scientific evidence, and clinical judgment
- 4.2 Communicate effectively with colleagues within one's profession or specialty, other health professionals, and health related agencies.
- 5.1 Demonstrate compassion, integrity, and respect for others.
- 5.5 Demonstrate sensitivity and responsiveness to a diverse patient population including but not limited to diversity in gender, age, culture, race, religion, disabilities, and sexual orientation.
- 6.4 Advocate for quality patient care and optimal patient care systems.
- 7.2 Use the knowledge of one's own role and the roles of other health professionals to appropriately assess and address the health care needs of the patients and populations served.

Background

Women with disability often face barriers in accessing preconception and prenatal care. Frequently, sexuality and preconception care are overlooked, and women with disability must access information on these topics from peers or other non-provider sources. Physicians should not assume that women are not sexually active or are uninterested or incapable of being parents due to their disability.

Like many women, women with SCI may be interested in pregnancy and parenthood. However, they may also have some specific medical concerns related to their disability. These concerns and the care they require will be specific to each individual, and should be explored on a case by case basis.

Student Preparation

Before meeting for this discussion, students should watch the 25 minute video *Professional Insights into Managing Pregnancy after Spinal Cord Injury* from the University of Alabama Spinal Cord Injury Model System Center (UAB SCIMS). This video explores pregnancy for women with spinal cord injury, with information from experts, as well as the personal experience of a mother with spinal cord injury and her physician, who has no special training related to SCI. The video is available at the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVnsTMVy5wg&feature=youtu.be>

Activity Outline

1. First, ask students to briefly share their thoughts on people with disability who are parents – Do they have any concerns or biases about parents with disability? Do students personally know any parents with a disability? [5 min.]
2. Before the group discussion, play this clip from the video (2:20 – 4:06). [2 min.]
3. As a group discussion, address the **Set 1** discussion prompts. [10 min.]
4. After addressing the questions, play this clip from the video (5:05 – 6:07). [1 min.]
5. Discuss the **Set 2** discussion prompts. [10 min.]
6. After addressing the questions, play this clip from the video (23:01 – 24:30). [1.5 min.]
7. Discuss the **Set 3** discussion prompts, and ask students to reflect on ways that they can support people with disability who are interested in parenthood. [10 min.]

Discussion Prompts

Set 1:

1. Are any of these specific medical concerns surprising?
2. How does this information fit into your understanding of people with spinal cord injury?

3. What are the benefits of team-based care for a woman with SCI who wishes to become pregnant?

Set 2:

1. What allowed this physician, without specific training, to provide quality care to his patient?
2. Consider the experience this patient might have had if her physician had been unaware of her plans for a family, or had never asked about her interest in having children?

Set 3:

1. Have your thoughts about women with SCI becoming parents been changed by this video? What was that change?
2. As a future physician, what do you see as your role in supporting people with disability who wish to become parents?

Resources

For more information on spinal cord injury please review the SCI Fact Sheets from the University of Alabama Spinal Cord Injury Model System Center (UAB SCIMS), which can be found at <http://www.uab.edu/medicine/sci/uab-scims-information/sci-infosheets>

An evidence based point of care resource for clinical decision support may also provide up to date information on spinal cord injury.