

State Spinal Cord Injury Service – Psychosocial Strategy

CASE STUDY 2: Rehabilitation setting

Nancy is a 36 year old married woman who sustained an in complete C6 spinal injury in an MVA; she has an 8 year old daughter. Nancy is now 10 months post injury however she is very dependent on those around her. She previously worked as graphic design freelancer, doing long hours. Nancy is experiencing chronic neuropathic pain and has recently been medicated with methadone and is on the list for a Baclofan pump for spasm control. She is very deconditioned and her mobility is affected by pain.

Nancy reports that her mood is very low and she is having trouble sleeping. She has expressed some suicidal ideation. She is finding it difficult to relate to her daughter and is spending little time with her. She also reports marital strain, experiencing her husband of 9 years as distant and distracted. He is no longer affectionate and she is concerned that he is not able to deal with her SCI.

Questions to think about when interacting with Nancy:

1. Are there any pre-injury factors that you think may impact Nancy's progress / adjustment in this rehabilitation phase? Such as:
 - emotional history & previous vulnerabilities (previous depression or trauma?)
 - beliefs about self, the world (as a woman, a mother, a wife, a worker)
 - coping
 - beliefs about disability
 - environmental factors
 - biological factors
 - social support
2. What are some of the personality traits that may contribute to the way Nancy interacts on the ward?
3. How do you think Nancy has coped with previous life stressors?
4. How might you empower Nancy?

Psychosocial Issues that may arise for Allied Health and Nursing in their interactions:

Nursing Issues:

1. Nancy has been trialling a variety of pain medications and despite being constipated is reluctant to change her bowel meds to those suggested by her Doctor.
 - a. What do you think is going on for Nancy?
 - b. What might be helpful or unhelpful to say in this situation?
 2. Nursing staff have found Nancy to be very weepy in the evenings. She says that she can't manage and can't cope any more. Recently, staff have noticed that Nancy is behaving like this in the presence of her husband.
 - a. Is there any thing that can be said to assist Nancy?
 - b. How could you manage this situation?
-

Occupational therapy Issues:

1. Nancy is reluctant to engage with vocational rehabilitation services stating that she can no longer work.
 - a. What do you think is happening for Nancy?
 - b. How do you think Nancy is experiencing her SCI?
 - c. What might you do to enhance her sense of self-efficacy?
 2. Nancy appears anxious when discussing equipment issues e.g., commode and bed for scripting
 - a. What is Nancy communicating here?
 - b. What might be helpful or unhelpful to say at this point?
 - c. What can you do to promote adaptive coping in this instance?
-

Physiotherapy therapy Issues:

1. Nancy has not been attending PT. In Goal Planning she states that she wants to attend but has a lot going on and is finding it difficult to focus.
 - a. Taking into account the above questions, what do you think Nancy is experiencing at the moment and how could you help her?
 - b. What might be unhelpful or helpful in this instance?
 2. When she does attend gym sessions, Nancy tends to tire easily and is struggling to complete her PT programme, requiring lots of encouragement and pushing. This is a change from her previous performance.
 - a. How could you deal with this situation?
 - b. What strategies might you use to increase Nancy's willingness to accept responsibility for her functional improvement?
-

Social Work Issues:

1. The team are complaining that Nancy is no longer taking part in ward /rehab activities.
 - a. What do you think is going on for Nancy emotionally?
 - b. As her SW, how might you address this with Nancy and what should you consider in the discussion?
2. Nancy has mentioned that her husband is taking over and is often over controlling and that she is finding this very frustrating?
 - a. What strategies might assist Nancy in this situation?
 - b. What would be helpful and unhelpful responses to this situation?