

State Spinal Cord Injury Service – Psychosocial Strategy

CASE STUDY 3: Community setting

Kevin is a 37-year-old man, with T6 paraplegia. He commenced working as a trainee draftsman at the Local Council Planning Office 7 months ago but is having difficulty meeting deadlines. Kevin reports a few problems getting on with work colleagues and has been told on several occasions that the boss is not happy with the work submitted. He has had frequent sick leave in the last couple of months with urinary tract infections, and headaches and he is finding it difficult to get up in the morning. Kevin states that he feels worthless and angry. His relationship has become strained as he wants to spend more time at home as he feels too tired to go out. Kevin states that his girl friend always seems frustrated with him and says that he is avoiding her.

Kevin says that life is too hard now, “things didn’t seem to mean as much” to him any more, he states that he is “no longer getting enjoyment out of things like he use to”. Kevin has recently given up playing sport and is spending more time drinking and has begun smoking marijuana most weekends. He has increased his pain medication recently despite the fact that his pain had previously been managed well with limited medication.

Questions to think about when interacting with Kevin:

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

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

Nursing Issues:

1. Community nursing staff has recently visited on his request to look at a pressure area that is now infected. They are concerned about Kevin's level of self-neglect and his increased use of drugs and alcohol.
 - a. What do you think is going on for Kevin?
 - b. What might be helpful or unhelpful to say in this situation?

 2. It is clear to nursing staff from SOS that Kevin is not complying with his bladder management regime.
 - a. Why do you think Kevin is not complying?
 - b. What would be helpful or unhelpful interventions in this situation?
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Occupational therapy Issues:

1. On a regular check-up you discover that Kevin has been experiencing difficulties at work and you want to explore this with him.
 - a. What issues might you consider exploring with Kevin?
 - b. What strategies might you consider to enhance his sense of self-efficacy in this situation/ what might be useful here?

 2. On your recent visit you discover that Kevin has moved house and no longer has some of the equipment that was prescribed on leaving hospital. You think that his new home is not really appropriate for someone with a SCI and you suspect after some discussion that some of the reported difficulties are a result of this.
 - a. What might be helpful or unhelpful to say at this point aiming to assist Kevin in living independently?
 - b. What can you do to promote adaptive coping in this instance?
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Physiotherapy therapy Issues:

1. At his recent 18 month check-up it Kevin is reluctant to modify some of his behaviour to prevent future functional loss. He has previously reported shoulder trouble although he states that it no longer matters as he is not going to play basket ball any more.
 - a. Taking into account the above questions, what do you think Kevin is experiencing at the moment and how could you help him deal with this?
 - b. What might be unhelpful or helpful in this instance?
 - c. How might you help Kevin to re-engage in sport?

 2. Recently Kevin has stopped doing the exercises required to maintain mobility in his shoulders stating that he never has any time and that they are waste of time.
 - d. How could you deal with this situation?
 - e. What strategies might you use to increase Kevin's willingness to accept responsibility for maintenance of his functional ability?
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Social Work Issues:

1. Kevin has complained in a recent visit that his girlfriend doesn't understand what is happening.
 - a. What do you think is going on for Kevin emotionally?
 - b. As his SW, how might you address this with Kevin and what should you consider in the discussion?

2. Kevin's girlfriend has phoned you at SOS to discuss their relationship. She feels distanced from him and that he is avoiding her physically.
 - a. What strategies might assist Kevin and his partner in this situation?
 - b. What would be helpful and unhelpful responses to this situation?