

Sigma's 29th International Nursing Research Congress

I Am Woman: Gender Specific Issues for Australian Women Following Traumatic Brain Injury

Kate M. O'Reilly, MCR

School of Nursing and Midwifery, Western Sydney University, Penrith, Australia

Purpose: This work explored the experience of women with traumatic brain injury. Robust research in the field of TBI is readily available; however given the significantly higher rate of TBI in the male population an exploration of gender issues which are specific for women following TBI remain scarce in the literature. Currently, research related to women post TBI is limited to small cohorts and fails to adequately explore the diversity of this population (Alston, Jones & Curtin, 2012; Haag, Caringal, Sokoloff, Kontos, Yoshida & Colantonio, 2016; Howes, Benton & Edwards, 2005a, 2005b). Similarly, research within Australia is limited with one study looking at outcome measures alone (Slewa-Younan et al., 2008) and the other focusing on the experience for women in rural areas of New South Wales (Alston et al., 2012).

Researchers recognise there is a gender differential among people with disabilities, however this body of research is limited (Meade, Mahmoudi & Lee, 2015). This research explored what the health, activity and participation issues are for Australian women post TBI in an effort to enhance the research base, with the aim of informing clinical care, policy development and advocacy priorities. Pragmatism as a research paradigm underpins a concurrent mixed methods approach for this research. This integrates both the understanding of the broader society through a quantitative survey with what is found from hearing women's individual experiences in qualitative interviews (O'Reilly, Peters, Wilson & Kwok, 2017). A quantitative survey enhances understanding of the breadth of issues using a numerical perspective while the qualitative data adds understanding of individual's lived experience. Without research which focuses specifically on the experience of women with traumatic brain injury there is a risk that clinical care, policy development and advocacy services will not effectively accommodate them.

The body of research exploring women's issues post TBI is limited and requires further development. Australia's contribution to the published research however is limited with of the most recent research coming from Canada (Colantonio, 2016; Colantonio et al., 2010). Given the inconsistent findings in the literature and the developing recognition that outcome measures do not reflect the lived experience, qualitative research is essential if rehabilitation, health and disability services are to adequately meet the needs of women following TBI (O'Reilly, Wilson & Peters, 2017). This work presents a much broader perspective of the health, activity and participation issues for women following TBI in an effort to prevent quiescent yet pervasive marginalisation.

Methods: Mixed methods research using an online survey and qualitative interviews

Results: Ongoing Project

Conclusion: This work presents a much broader perspective of the health, activity and participation issues for women following TBI in an effort to prevent quiescent yet pervasive marginalisation.

Title:

I Am Woman: Gender Specific Issues for Australian Women Following Traumatic Brain Injury

Keywords:

Gender, Traumatic Brain Injury and Women

References:

- Alston, M., Jones, J., & Curtin, M. (2012). Women and traumatic brain injury: "It's not visible damage". *Australian Social Work*, 65 (1), 39 – 53.
- Colantonio, A. (2016). Sex, gender and traumatic brain injury: A commentary. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 97:1 - 4.
- Colantonio, A., Mar, W., Escobar, M., Yoshida, K., Velikonja, D., Rizoli, S., Cusimano, M., & Cullen, (2010). Women's health outcomes after traumatic brain injury. *Journal of Women's Health* 19, (6), 1109 – 1116.
- Haag, H., Caringal, M., Sokoloff, S., Kontos, P., Yoshida, K., & Colantonio, A. (2016). Being a woman with acquired brain injury: Challenges and implications for practice. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, (2 Suppl 1), 564 – 570.
- Howes, H., Benton, D., & Edwards, S. (2005a). Women's experience of brain injury: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Psychology and Health*, 20 (1), 129 – 142.
- Howes, H., Benton, D., & Edwards, S. (2005b). Female body image following acquired brain injury. *Brain Injury*, 19, (6), 403 – 415.
- Meade, M., Mahmoudi, E., & Lee, S. (2015). The intersection of disability and healthcare disparities: A conceptual framework. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 37, (7), 632- 641.
- O'Reilly, K., Wilson, N., & Peters, K. (2017). Narrative literature review: Health, activity and participation issues for women following traumatic brain injury. *Disability and Rehabilitation*. 1 – 12. DOI:10.1080/09638288.2017.1334838.
- O'Reilly, K., Peters, K., Wilson, N. & Kwok, C. (2017). Pragmatism: Exploring women's experience of living with traumatic brain injury– Offering a kaleidoscopic view of the world. *Nurse Researcher*. (Accepted - Waiting for Publication)
- Slewa-Younan, S., Bagueley, I., Heriseanu, R., Cameron, I., Pitsiavas, V., Mudalair, Y., & Nayyar, V. (2008). Do men and women differ in their course following traumatic brain injury? A preliminary prospective investigation of early outcome. *Brain Injury*, 22(2), 183 – 191.

Abstract Summary:

This paper presents preliminary findings regarding the experience of women following traumatic brain injury. Without this research there is a risk that clinical care, policy development and advocacy services will not effectively accommodate women with traumatic brain injury.

Content Outline:

INTRODUCTION

Statistics tell us that more men sustain a traumatic brain injury than women.

Research into the area is extensive however it has been a gender-neutral discussion.

Research related to women post traumatic brain injury is limited to small cohorts and fails to adequately explore the diversity of this population.

BODY

The health, activity and participation issues identified within the literature are arranged into the following five themes

- 1) Perception of self and body image
- 2) Relationships and life satisfaction
- 3) Meaningful occupation
- 4) Physical function
- 5) Sexuality and sexual health

CONCLUSION

This work presents a much broader perspective of the health, activity and participation issues for women following TBI in an effort to prevent quiescent yet pervasive marginalisation.

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

Kate M. O'Reilly, MCR

Western Sydney University
School of Nursing and Midwifery
Associate Lecturer
Penrith
Australia

Professional Experience: After completing a Bachelor of Nursing and a Graduate Certificate in Community Nursing, as part of a Master of Clinical Rehabilitation (RESEARCH) I explored the post intensive rehabilitation care of young adults with severe acquired brain injury. This research was a qualitative study using grounded theory methods. The research was presented in a 30,000 word thesis, was peer reviewed by two academics and was accepted by Flinders University in 2011. This paper presents work which is from my candidature as a PhD student with Western Sydney University.

Author Summary: Kate O'Reilly is an Associate Lecturer in the undergraduate and postgraduate nursing program at Western Sydney University and is a PhD candidate exploring women's experience of traumatic brain injury. As a Clinical Nurse Consultant in the area of rehabilitation for many years, Kate worked in both inpatient and community settings supporting people following catastrophic injury and illness.

