

The facts about spinal cord injuries in Alberta

In 1997 in Alberta there were 105 inpatient injury hospitalizations with a most responsible diagnosis of spinal cord injury.¹

- Over two-thirds (69%) of these were males.
 - Motor vehicle related injuries and falls (41% and 31% respectively) were the leading causes of injury resulting in a spinal cord injury.
 - The rate of spinal cord injury resulting in inpatient hospitalizations per 100,000 population was 3.5. The highest rate was to people aged 75 and greater with a rate of 8.5, followed by those aged 20-24 with a rate of 6.9.⁴
 - Nearly one-quarter (22.9%) of spinal cord injured patients required treatment in a special care unit (such as an ICU) during their hospitalization.
 - The average length of stay in an acute care hospital for a spinal cord injured Albertan was 16.1 days, compared with an average length of stay of 7 days for other types of injuries.
 - One quarter of spinal cord injured patients were transferred to the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital inpatient program. Fourteen percent were transferred to another acute care hospital to be admitted for further treatment. Nearly five percent died from their injuries. The remaining 56% of spinal cord injured patients were discharged home.
- Between 1993 and 1997 over 550 Albertans were hospitalized with a most responsible diagnosis of spinal cord injury.¹
 - *Closed fracture of the cervical vertebra with damage or injury to the spinal cord* was the diagnosis most frequently recorded among the spinal cord injured patients hospitalized between 1993 and 1997. This diagnosis accounts for over one-quarter of the spinal cord injuries between 1993 and 1997. Nearly three-quarters of these cervical vertebra fractures were in the C5-C7 level.¹
 - According to the National Trauma Registry Annual Report for 1995/96, Alberta ranked 5th out of all Canadian provinces and territories for the number of inpatient hospitalizations with spinal cord injuries per 100,000 population.²
 - According to The Economic Burden of Unintentional Injury In Canada, the average cost of spinal cord injuries (average \$529,346 per case) was found to be the most expensive type of injury.³

- In a 1996 survey of 966 working-aged Canadians with spinal cord injuries, only 38% were employed. By comparison 78% of the total Canadian population of the same age and gender were employed.⁵
- Education plays a great role in determining employment of people with spinal cord injuries. According to a survey by the Canadian Paraplegic Association individuals with a higher level of education were more likely to be employed.⁵

Source:

1. *Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research Inpatient Hospitalization Database*
2. *National Trauma Registry Report – Hospital Injury Admissions 1995/95; CIHI, April 1998*
3. *The Economic Burden of Unintentional Injury in Canada; SmartRisk, 1998*
4. *Population Projections for Alberta and It's Health Regions 1996-2016; Health Surveillance, Alberta Health & Wellness, April 1998*
5. *Canadian Paraplegic Association (1996). Workforce Participation Survey of Canadians with Spinal Cord Injuries. Final Report*

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