

# An Intense Sabbatical – What one mid-career researcher has learned about Spinal cord injury since his son acquired one

*VISTA Conference  
Amsterdam, Netherlands  
4<sup>th</sup> September, 2019*



Classification Research Partner

School of Human Movement & Nutrition Sciences  
University of Queensland

# Overview

- Background and timelines - what happened when
- Some things I have learned
  - The role of determination in recovery
  - Friends
  - What do I do now?

# Background - Me

3 of my main “life roles”

- Ex-rugby player
- Working with people with spinal cord injuries
- Father





# Background - Conor





St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace vs Brisbane Boys College 2<sup>nd</sup> XV,  
13:10hrs, 21.7.18



In that instant, on 21.7.19, my life roles became, literally, very muddled and jumbled:

- From ex-rugby player and father who worked with people who had SCI
- To father of a boy who got a spinal injury playing rugby



# Timelines 21.7.18 to Present

- 21.7.18
  - 1310hrs scrum collapse, Fracture dislocation C4 on C5, resulting in cord compression injury and tetraplegia (ASIA A)
  - 1710hrs Sean and Bec getting surgeon report on how the surgical enlocation went
- 24.7.18 (+3days) from ICU to Orthopaedic ward
- 21.8.18 (+4weeks) From orthopaedic ward to SIU
- 30.9.18 (+9weeks) first time to W/C rugby
- October 2018 back to School from SIU
- December 2018 – sold family home & moved to accessible units
- Feb 2019 Conor comes home
- June 2019 Big Bash (First W/C rugby tournament)
- November 2019 – finishes school

# Overview

- Background and timelines - what happened when
- Some things I have learned
  - The role of determination in recovery
  - Friends
  - What do I do now?



# Determination

Reality:

Trying hard and being determined are critical for getting best results in rehabilitation.

Common misconception

- more determined people get better outcomes than less determined people (if only life were that fair!)



Week 6 Ollie and Conor

# Overview

- Background and timelines - what happened when
- Some things I have learned
  - The role of determination in recovery
  - Friends
  - What do I do now?



# Factors associated with quality of life among people with spinal cord injury

341 Community-dwelling adults w SCI

Factors that have strong, significant association with QOL are:

- marital status;
- Participation (local shopping, social occasions, hobbies, employment) and
- activity (independence in personal care and transportation)

Factors not associated with QOL include impairment (i.e., injury level, injury completeness and secondary complications).

Chang, F. H., et al. (2012). "Factors associated with quality of life among people with spinal cord injury: application of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health model." Arch Phys Med Rehabil **93**(12): 2264-2270









# Overview

- Background and timelines - what happened when
- Some things I have learned
  - The role of determination in recovery
  - Friends, Romans Countrymen
  - What do I do now?

- The sideline conversation
- Heroic change in research focus or business as usual?
- Research in health – 2 pillars
  - Prevention
  - Cure
- Utopia?
- A 3<sup>rd</sup> pillar in Health Research
- Business as usual!





Thank you