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

VISTA Conference
Amsterdam, Netherlands
4th September, 2019
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\textsuperscript{nd} 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**
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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
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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).

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The sideline conversation

Heroic change in research focus or business as usual?

Research in health – 2 pillars
- Prevention
- Cure

Utopia?

A 3rd pillar in Health Research

Business as usual!
Thank you