

Investigating sexuality and body image changes in women who have sustained burn injuries

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Kylie is currently in the process of completing her PhD study titled 'Quality of Life Following Trauma: An Exploratory Study of the Impact of Scarring on Sexuality and Body Image of Females who have sustained a Burn Injury' in conjunction with her supervisors Professor Rosemary Coates (Curtin) and Winthrop Professor Fiona Wood (RPH and The Fiona Wood Foundation).

Using a sequential mixed methods model research design, the first phases of this research has involved the analysis of outcome measure data collected over the past eight years from the Royal Perth Hospital Burns Unit. Findings from the data analysis conducted suggest that burn survivors experience significant body image and sexuality issues following their injuries. Furthermore, instead of body image and sexual satisfaction improving as physical function improves, these issues either remain static or increase at 12 months post injury. Other burn related research has investigated the impact of body image dissatisfaction in burn survivors, and this study adds to this body of knowledge which indicates that body image dissatisfaction is an important predictor of overall quality of life long term in people with disfiguring injuries. However, this study is the first to show that there is also a potential interaction with body image and sexual esteem and poor quality of life outcomes in females post burn injury. The preliminary phase of this research has currently been published ahead of print and the second phase data analysis is currently in the process of being submitted for journal publication.

In addition to the quantitative data analysis, qualitative semi-structured interviews with female burn survivors have been conducted and transcribed. The aim of this phase is to provide narrative of the 'lived experience' of changes to individual's body image and sexuality following burn injuries. This data is currently being analysed with the view to publish later this year.

If you would like further information on this research project please contact Kylie at k.connell@ecu.edu.au

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