



## **Disability and Sexuality: The role of the Occupational Therapist in Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation**

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You are invited to participate in this study.

### **Background**

Literature from the discourse on social disability has shown that persons with disabilities are considered to be asexual. My PhD research is keen find out more about the role of occupational therapists (OTs) registered in Western Australia in assisting adults with acquired brain injuries (ABI) to maintain or develop a positive view of their post injury sexual self. The study will consider the experiences of OTs working with ABI clients, and include questions on how often OTs are asked to treat clients on matters relating to sexuality and sexual rehabilitation. Further, the research asks how well OTs feel they are supported in their role by external players, such as; educational facilities, colleagues within the health system and the family members of clients.

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of the study is to consider if literature in the field of social disability studies is correct in the suggestion that persons with disabilities are treated as asexual beings. This study has the potential to introduce a different perspective to the idea of disabled persons being asexual. Results from this study will make a positive contribution to the discourse on disability and sexuality by reflecting on the role of OTs in assisting in the repair of 'spoilt identities' in persons with acquired disabilities.

### **What Does Your Participation Involve?**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in one, or both of the following tasks:

- Part one: requires the participant to complete the survey found on the Murdoch University Social & Community On-line Research Database ;  
<http://scored.murdoch.edu.au/survey/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=7822n64> .  
The survey will collect data that will assist in shaping the questions for part two of the study and providing quantitative data for analysis. The survey asks about your age, place of education, the year you graduated from Occupational Therapy School, what field you practice in, your race and religion. You will also be asked a series of questions on how you feel about assisting clients on sexual matters. Some of these questions may be seen as personal and private. It is estimated the survey will take 30 minutes.
- Part two: consists of an interview, preferably face-to-face or via Skype. Interviews will be recorded on a digital audio recording device. A transcript of the interview will be sent to you to read and confirm its accuracy. Participants have the right to request contextual changes to the text, or request the researcher does not use specific data in publication. Participants will nominate an alias at the beginning of their interview; this will be recorded on the consent form. No identifying information on participants will be used in any publication or

documentation arising from the research. It is estimated the interview will take between 60 to 90 minutes. The participant has the right to end the interview at any time.

### **Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study**

It is important that you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While I would be pleased to have you participate, I respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate. If you decide to discontinue participation you may do so without providing an explanation, however you must be aware that:

- Part One: Participation cannot be withdrawn after you have submitted the survey.
- Part Two: Participation cannot be withdrawn after the analysis of data has taken place, analysis will be complete twelve months from the approval in writing of each individual transcript.

### **Your privacy**

Your privacy is very important to me and my supervisors. Your participation in this study and any information will be treated in a confidential manner. Your name and identifying details will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. Following the study the data will be kept in a de-identified format, in a locked cabinet in the office of the Chief Investigator.

### **Possible Benefits**

It is possible that results from this study will be used in future discussions on disability and sexuality. More importantly, I hope the results will bring a balanced approach to social disability literature by including the role of health professionals, in particular occupational therapists in providing the means for persons with acquired disabilities to maintain or develop a positive sexual identity post injury.

### **Possible Risks**

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study. However, if you find that you are becoming distressed or uncomfortable with questions asked you will be advised to receive support from Lifeline ([www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)) or alternatively, we will arrange for you to see a counsellor at no expense to you through the Murdoch Psychology Clinic, contactable on 9360 6234. Alternatively contact your Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) for support.

### **Questions**

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and your role in the process of the study. If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself, Beth Lewis or my supervisor Associate Professor Gary Wickham on (08) 9360 2546. My supervisor and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have regarding this study.

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2013 029). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University's Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 (for overseas studies, +61 8 9360 6677) or e-mail [ethics@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:ethics@murdoch.edu.au)). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.