

WHAT IS THE BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL?

SPINAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE | CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM



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The biopsychosocial (bio-psycho-social) model is a framework that attributes the cause and effect of health and illness to an interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors. It was first proposed by psychiatrist George L. Engel in 1977. Unlike the traditional biomedical model, which attributes disease to purely physical causes, the biopsychosocial model considers the complex interactions between these three dimensions and their influence on an individual's health and wellbeing. These dimensions are: Biological factors, Psychological factors and Social factors. The model aims to provide a more rounded understanding in addressing challenges and providing treatment rather than purely addressing medical interventions as was traditionally the case.

THE BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL AND SPINAL CORD INJURY

Consumers with spinal cord injuries (SCI) can face multiple barriers that impact overall quality of life. By using the biopsychosocial model, researchers can address different aspects of SCI.

Biological: Research in this area may focus on cures for spinal cord injury or investigate medical interventions that address secondary complications such as bladder/bowel incontinence, pain management, spasticity, fatigue and pressure sores.

Psychological: Research in this area addresses psychological aspects of living with a spinal cord injury. Areas of interest may include psychological adjustment to living with a spinal cord injury, as well as prevalence of mental illness amongst the SCI community.

Social: Research in this area investigates the social impact of SCI, as well as how the social environment impacts on participation in the community. This may include areas such as relationships, employment, and recreation/leisure, as well as how societal attitudes towards people living with SCI impacts their quality of life.

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The Consumer Engagement Program is supported by the SRI's major partner, the IOOF Foundation. Resources are developed with the support of the John T Reid Charitable Trusts, The Marian and E.H. Flack Trust and the Brian M. Davis Charitable Foundation.