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Ageing with spinal cord injuries and preventing complications

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Spinal cord injury (SCI) in elderly patients is increasingly common and the prevalence of spinal injuries among older adults has been increasing more and more. The spinal cord injury (SCI) affects different systems such as sensory, motor, autonomic nervous system generating a clinical picture of paraplegia or quadriplegia both accompanied by many organ dysfunctions. The individual with SCI typically is young at the time of injury and as a result of the SCI, experiences an immediate reduction of some of the functional reserves and capacities. The patient with SCI experiences a more rapid development of characteristics related to normal ageing. The mechanism of trauma and patterns of SCI differ from those in younger patients. Additionally, the high prevalence of degenerative changes and stenosis in the elderly population may influence the clinical presentation and treatment patterns. Systemic medical issues and severity of neurological injury may contribute to the extremely high mortality rate in elderly patients. The elderly patients who survive SCI have the potential for meaningful functional and neurological recovery and require directed rehabilitation to this end so the prevention of ageing related complications are very important in patient with SCI. The learning objectives are to describe the prevalence of SCI in elderly patients, the clinical presentation and treatment patterns, the systemic medical issues and severity of neurological injury, the potential for meaningful functional and neurological recovery and the prevention of ageing related complications in patient with SCI.

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