

Helping people with spinal cord injury return to work

July 5 2016

University of Adelaide researchers are calling for participants for a national study aimed at assisting Australians with a spinal cord injury to return to work.

The [project](#) – involving an online-based job information package – could help to improve the [wellbeing](#) and [confidence](#) of [job seekers](#) with spinal cord injury.

"The average rate of employment among adults with a spinal cord injury is around 35%, but we know that many more are capable of engaging in paid employment," says Dr Diana Dorstyn from the University's School of Psychology.

"This underutilisation of people with a spinal cord injury contributes to significant personal costs for the injured individuals and their families. The long-term care and lost productivity costs are estimated at almost \$500 million per year.

"Resuming employment after a serious injury provides an opportunity to interact with others and has been shown to contribute to general quality of life and life satisfaction," Dr Dorstyn says.

The free online resource has been developed by Dr Dorstyn, Dr Rachel Roberts and Professor Anna Chur-Hansen from the University of Adelaide's School of Psychology, working with a team of researchers from La Trobe University, Monash University, University of Sydney,

University of Technology Sydney, PQSA (Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Association of SA) and SA Spinal Cord Injury Service.

"The resource our team has developed targets job seeking and job retention skills in addition to work knowledge, such as understanding the current job market and helping people to recognise their own vocational skills," Dr Dorstyn says.

This new national project follows on from a pilot study conducted last year looking at a similar job resource, developed for people with multiple sclerosis (MS).

The results of that study – now published online in the journal *Disability and Rehabilitation* – showed significant positive effects for people with MS, helping to promote vocational goals, interests and personal strengths, and building optimism among the sample group.

"The results so far have been very promising. We encourage anyone with a spinal cord injury to take part in our new study so that we can maximise the benefits for people in returning to work, helping them to achieve both career and life goals," Dr Dorstyn says.

More information: Australians aged 18 and over who have a spinal cord injury can take part in the free online trial:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/Work_SCI

Provided by University of Adelaide

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