

# Physical activity coaching for adults with spinal cord injuries during the transition from rehabilitation centre care to living in the community

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## Background



Most individuals with spinal cord injuries (SCI) participate in lower levels of physical activity (PA) than the general population (van den Berg-Emons et al., 2010).



PA typically peaks during inpatient rehabilitation and declines upon discharge due to various barriers present in the community (van den Berg-Emons et al., 2010).



PA coaching from physiotherapists and SCI peers can increase PA in-hospital and in the community (Shirley et al., 2010; Letts et al., 2011).

## Purpose

This implementation study involved a coordinated PA coaching program delivered by physiotherapists and SCI peers during the transition from in-hospital care to living in the community. Our objective was to assess how this program affected the sustainability of PA participation among those living with SCI.

## Methods



18 patients (Mage=47.4) had a physical activity coaching conversation and received an exercise prescription in-hospital from a physiotherapist. Prior to discharge, participants were referred to trained SCI peers. Post-discharge, participants received monthly PA coaching sessions from a SCI peer.



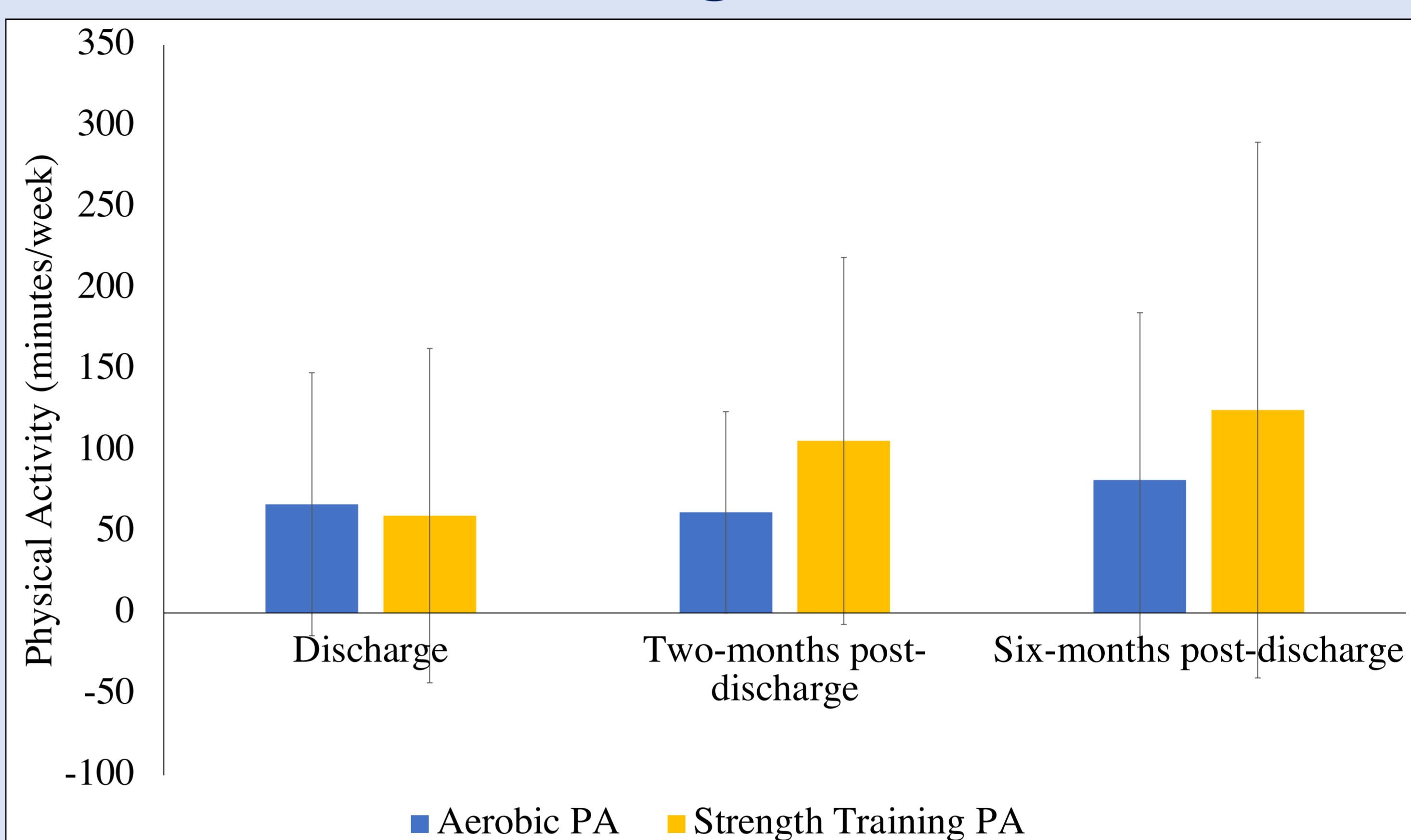
The LTPAQ-SCI was administered at baseline, 2-months, and 6-months post-discharge to assess PA behaviour. Data were analyzed using repeated measures ANOVA in SPSS (Martin Ginis et al., 2012).



Semi-structured interviews were conducted 6-months post-discharge to assess intervention satisfaction and effectiveness. Data were analyzed using a conventional content analysis approach.

## Results

### Physical Activity Levels Maintained from Discharge to 6-Months Post-Discharge



Note: All comparisons were  $p > 0.05$ , indicating no significant changes in physical activity post-discharge. Values are reported as group means. Error bars represent standard deviation.

### Interview themes:



#### Positive experiences:

- Information/resources provided to clients
- Clients felt increased accountability for being active
- Health benefits/improved quality of life



#### Negative Experiences

- Lack of facility accessibility & resources
- Lack of information available for participants who are ambulatory

## Implications & Future Directions



Physical activity coaching can prevent the declines in aerobic activity and strength-training typically seen post-discharge and help individuals with SCI meet the SCI physical activity guidelines.



A coordinated referral process, between rehabilitation center physiotherapists and community SCI peers, should be standard of care for adults with SCI.

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