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RECREATION PARTICIPATION PATTERNS OF THE HANDICAPPED:
THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

Recreation participation patterns of individuals have been found to vary by region of the country, culture, income, education and by other factors. A handicapping condition also alters this pattern particularly compared to the "normal" population. This article details the difference in participation patterns of adult multiple sclerosis victims and similar adults without multiple sclerosis and investigates the influence that the family has on that participation. It has been found that both similarities and differences exist and the influence of the family becomes a critical factor in the leisure lifestyle of the handicapped.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY

INTRODUCTION

In a recent study of thirty-two adult multiple sclerosis residents of Cache County, Utah (population 67,000), information was gathered regarding what type of recreational activities individuals with multiple sclerosis participate or do not participate in and why or why they don't participate in recreation activities. A similar group of non-multiple sclerosis residents were also studied to determine the differences between the recreational patterns of those with multiple sclerosis from the non-multiple sclerosis population.

Each multiple sclerosis adult as well as a non-multiple sclerosis adult (with similar educational, income, family, and geographic characteristics) was interviewed and assessed concerning forty-eight recreational activities which were broken down into four clusters of participation (social, physical, cognitive, and environment related). The individuals then indicated if they participated in that activity, if so how often, where (home, neighborhood, community), with whom (self, family, friends, others) that participation occurred, and the primary reason for that participation. If the individual indicated that they did

not participate in an activity, they were then asked the reason for that non-participation. Not only was data gathered that described the adult multiple sclerosis recreation patterns, but what similarities and differences exist with non-multiple sclerosis adults. It was found that the influence of the family or lack of family was critical to much of the recreation participation of these handicapped individuals.

COGNITIVE RELATED RECREATION

The findings of this study indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the recreation participation of multiple sclerosis adults compared to non-multiple sclerosis adults in cognitive related recreation activities. Those activities in which mental process is the primary focus of the recreation (i.e. reading a book, playing chess, watching a drama) regardless of where the activity took place or with whom, multiple sclerosis adults and non-multiple sclerosis adults maintain essentially the same participation patterns.

PHYSICAL RELATED RECREATION

Statistically significant differences were found in recreation participation patterns particularly in the physically related area. These activities would include the use of the body as the primary focus of the recreation (i.e. sports involvement, fitness and exercise activities).

Further investigation revealed that physically related recreation was essentially non-existent with adult multiple sclerosis victims and having a supportive family made little difference in their ability to participate in those types of activities. (see Table 1)

It should be noted that in most circumstances, participation does not alter regardless of where participation takes place or with whom. The one exception is in the area of physical recreation participation with friends in the community setting. It would appear that both multiple sclerosis adults and non-multiple sclerosis adults have the same level of involvement. It was found upon further investigation that the "typical" adult non-multiple sclerosis resident of a community does not generally participate in community based physical recreation related activities with friends. Therefore, neither group maintains a high level of participation in this area and hence there exists no real difference.

SOCIAL RELATED RECREATION

Some differences were noted in the recreation participation patterns in social recreation activities or those in which interaction with others is the primary focus of the recreation (i.e. visiting with others, out for dinner, telephoning, attending parties). It would appear that multiple sclerosis adults are involved less frequently in social activities in the community in which multiple sclerosis adults are required to participate in that activity by themselves or with their

family. It is less likely that an individual with multiple sclerosis will venture out into the community to participate in social recreation activities unless there is involvement with friends for that activity. (see Table 2)

There is one area where many of the subjects when interviewed indicated the "great hardship" that they felt was placed on their family to take them to community settings for recreation participation. However, when encouraged to go into the community with friends the effort was made.

ENVIRONMENT RELATED RECREATION

There also existed some differences in the recreation participation patterns in environment-related activities in which interaction with nature, the out-of-doors or the environment is the primary focus of the activity (i.e. gardening, nature outing, water or winter related activities).

It seems that adult multiple sclerosis residents are less likely to be involved in out-of-doors activities which are a distance from their residences unless they are accompanied by friends, however, there is limited involvement in neighborhood based activities with friends. Again, when interviewed the subjects generally indicated that much of their ability to participate in activities in the out-of-doors was related to the ability of the family to assist in that effort. (see Table 3)

A variety of conclusions could be drawn from this study, but a few conclusions seem most prevalent. It would seem clear that multiple sclerosis adults use cognitive based recreation activities as their major source of leisure involvement and expression. It would also seem clear that multiple sclerosis adults do not use physical recreation activities as a primary source of leisure involvement. In the four recreation clusters of cognitive, physical, social, and environment-related, friends of multiple sclerosis residents appear to be making effort to involve the multiple sclerosis adults in community based activities. It also appears that community based recreation involvement is difficult for the multiple sclerosis adult when interaction centers around themselves or the family. Multiple sclerosis adults seem to have the same recreation participation patterns as non-multiple sclerosis adults which are self-involving or with their family except in community based activities or in the physical recreation activity area.

Both the multiple sclerosis adult and the comparison group of non-multiple sclerosis residents were asked the reason why they participate in selected recreation activities and the reasons why they choose not to participate in recreation. These reasons were then statistically analyzed to determine if there exists a difference between the two groups. (see Table 4)

Ten reasons were found in common for both groups as to why they participate in recreational activities. Three of these reasons were found to be significantly different if a person has multiple sclerosis. Adults with multiple sclerosis do not receive a greater sense of enjoyment

from their recreation compared to the non-multiple sclerosis group. Likewise, those with multiple sclerosis sense a lower level of relaxation from recreation. However, those with multiple sclerosis indicate a greater sense of being independent as their reason for recreation participation.

Ten reasons were identified by the two groups as to why they do not choose to participate in recreation. There were seven reasons which were significantly different between the two groups. Those with multiple sclerosis do not participate in recreation because of their disability, lack of enjoyment of the activity, the activity is not accessible to them and there is no one to participate in the activity with. Those without the multiple sclerosis condition, compared to those with multiple sclerosis, do not participate in recreation because they do not have sufficient time to do so, the recreation is too expensive, and the activities are not available within their area. (see Table 5)

Reason number ten required further investigation as it related to the family influence. The subjects generally felt that to place pressure on the family for the subjects recreation was difficult. It was interesting to note that those individuals that expressed the greatest leisure satisfaction were those in which the disease had not progressed to extreme disability and the family was still able to help or encourage with recreation participation.

Some conclusions appear appropriate relative to the reasons for recreation participation or non-participation. The recreation involvement of adults with multiple sclerosis, compared to non-multiple sclerosis adults, is lower in enjoyment and relaxation apparently because they are restricted by their disability which causes fewer recreation options coupled with greater accessibility concerns and the opportunity for others to participate with them in those activities. Recreation participation seems to be satisfying if the multiple sclerosis adult senses a feeling of being independent, particularly when constraints of time and money are not present.

Table 1

Physical Education Participation Patterns of Adult Multiple Sclerosis Residents Versus Non-Multiple Sclerosis Adults

	Self	Family	Friends
Home	Significant Difference	Significant Difference	Significant Difference
Neighborhood	Significant Difference	Significant Difference	Significant Difference
Community	Significant Difference	Significant Difference	No Significant Difference

Table 2

Social Recreation Participation Patterns of Adult Multiple Sclerosis Residents Versus Non-Multiple Sclerosis Adults

	Self	Family	Friends
Home	No Significant Difference	No Significant Difference	No Significant Difference
Neighborhood	No Significant Difference	No Significant Difference	No Significant Difference
Community	Significant Difference	Significant Difference	No Significant Difference

Table 3

Environment Related Recreation Participation Patterns of Adult Multiple Sclerosis Residents Versus Non-Multiple Sclerosis Adults

	Self	Family	Friends
Home	No Significant Difference	No Significant Difference	No Significant Difference
Neighborhood	No Significant Difference	No Significant Difference	Significant Difference
Community	Significant Difference	Significant Difference	No Significant Difference

Table 4

Reasons Given for Participation in Recreation Activities by Multiple Sclerosis Adults and Non-Multiple Sclerosis Adults

- (X) 1. Enjoyable
- 2. Investment in Self
- (X) 3. Relaxation
- 4. Sociability
- 5. Valuable to Me
- 6. Available to Me
- 7. Group Centered
- (X) 8. Being Independent
- 9. Sense of Accomplishment
- 10. Entertaining

X Represents a Statistically Significant Difference between the Two Groups

Table 5

Reasons Given for Non-Participation in Recreation Activities by Multiple Sclerosis Adults and Non-Multiple Sclerosis Adults

- (X) 1. Disability
- (X) 2. Do Not Like It
- 3. Unaware of Availability
- (X) 4. Inappropriate Time
- (X) 5. Too Expensive
- 6. Doing Something Instead
- (X) 7. Not Available in Area
- (X) 8. Not Accessible
- 9. Do Not Know How
- (X) 10. No One to Participate With

X Represents a Statistically Significant Difference between the Two Groups