

## Article

Lape, E., Katz, J., Losina, E., et al. (2018). Participant-reported benefits of involvement in an adaptive sports program: a qualitative study. *PM&R*, 10(5), 507-515.  
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## Adaptive Sports/Recreation Topic Categories

- Participation in Sports/Recreation

## Research Question

- What are participant-reported factors that act as barriers or facilitators to sustained participation in adaptive sports?

## Methodology

- Participants 18-60 years old were recruited from an adult community based adaptive sports program in Massachusetts, USA.
- Inclusion criteria included the presence of a mobility or sensory impairment, absence of concomitant cognitive impairment, and ability to speak or write in English.
- Qualitative focus group study.
- Two moderators led each of 3 audio-recorded focus groups using a moderator's guide featuring open-ended questions addressing 1) perceived benefits and drawbacks of the programs; 2) perceived barriers and facilitators to participation; and 3) suggestions for improvement.
- A thematic analysis of transcript data was then conducted to identify perceived benefits, barriers, and facilitators of participation.

## Results

- Seventeen participants (14 female, 3 male) ages 21-63 and active for 2 to 2.5 years in adaptive sports (cycling, sailing, golf, water sports) prior to study interviews participated in the study.
- Ten participants reported using a power or manual wheelchair and 7 were ambulatory. Nine distinct causes of disability were represented, the most prevalent being spinal cord injury (SCI), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and cerebral palsy (CP).
- Five themes were identified, encompassing 9 additional subthemes: 1) physical well-being and health/safety; 2) interpersonal and social relationships; 3) intrapersonal and beliefs/attitudes (4 subthemes); 4) physical environment; and 5) access (5 subthemes).

## Discussion/Conclusion

- Participants who had repeated participation in adapted sports program reported the experience as beneficial for both physical wellbeing and transformational in self-view.
- Facilitators to participation generally fell into personal, social or attitudinal categories.
- Barriers discovered included lack of knowledge from the medical community, difficulty accessing information, few role models, financial and safety concerns and transportation.
- Participants discussed novel strategies to overcome challenges presented, such as planning events long in advance to arrange transport or being exposed to live or video demonstrations of the adapted version of the sport.
- Another solution to increase participation was the idea of exposure of adaptive sport within an acute rehabilitation facility.

- In conclusion, the barriers and strategies to overcome identified in this study have implications to improve adapted sports programs so that more individuals may reap the physical, social and attitudinal benefits of adapted sport participation.

### **Article Strengths**

- Qualitative approach to identifying facilitators and barriers, which adds personal histories and attitudes.
- Higher percentage of female participants than generally seen in such studies.

### **Article Weaknesses**

- Potential for response bias to the survey, such that a higher number of participants who had enjoyed the programs could have volunteered.
- Higher percentage of female participants may make it less generalizable.
- As only those who had actually participated in sport were interviewed, analysis was unable to identify barriers for individuals who could not be a part of the program at all.

### **Take Home Messages**

- Numerous facilitators and barriers to participation in adaptive sports were identified.
- The depth of understanding regarding these five domains and a number of subthemes was enhanced by the qualitative, and therefore personal, data obtained.