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Doing, Being, Becoming, & Belonging: Addressing Leisure to Improve Quality of Life (QoL) for People with Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

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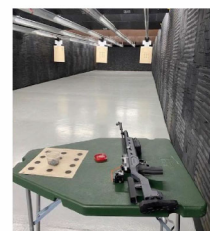
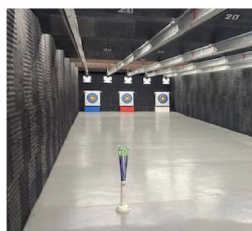
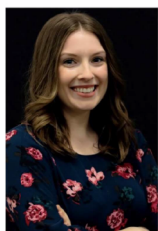


Background and Proposal Process

Individuals with new spinal cord injury will experience a major life transition that demands adaptation to loss of mobility and/or sensation, resulting in the need to relearn how to perform many occupations. During the literature review and needs assessment, it became unclear if leisure is an occupation that is thoroughly addressed during the rehabilitation process, as other occupations are prioritized during this critical period, such as self-care and functional mobility. The Cleveland VA SCI department has an established, successful recreational service that allowed the student to analyze how leisure and its components are being addressed in rehab, and how OT practitioners might aid in exploration and remediation of leisure activities, so clients feel more motivated, fulfilled, and independent while living in the community.

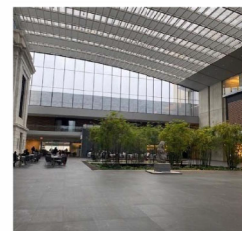
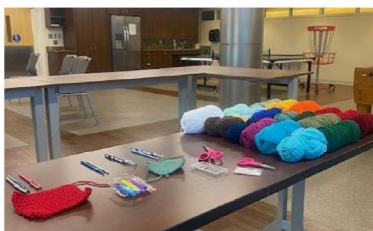
Biography

Melanie Grady will graduate with a Doctorate in Occupational Therapy and a Culture, Communication, and Health Care Certificate. During her time as a student, Melanie served as the Vice President for the Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) and Fundraising Chair for the Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD). Areas of interest include neurorehabilitation, environmental modification, assistive technology & equipment, and mental health. Melanie has a passion for occupational justice, diversity, and inclusivity.



Capstone Activities

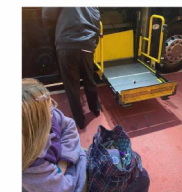
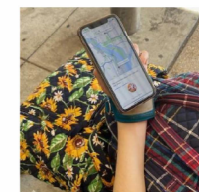
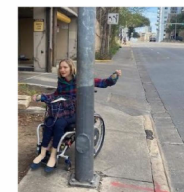
- Developed a 70+ page guidebook detailing adaptive equipment, technology, and NE Ohio experiences to facilitate leisure participation and satisfaction for those with physical disabilities
- Assisted with program development of the recreational services offered at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA SCI department
 - Observed and participated in numerous adaptive recreational outings including archery, bocchia, bowling, trips to museums, and much more
 - Outreach to local rock-climbing gyms to re-initiate an adaptive rock-climbing program
 - Organized and led a crochet-for-beginners group for VA staff and veterans
- Volunteered for the Buckeye Wheelchair Games and 3 Trackers of Ohio ski outings
- Served as a caregiver for 2 weeks, accompanying a wheelchair user during her travels to Austin, TX and Washington D.C.
- Shadowed a certified driver rehab specialist and researchers developing prosthetic software to improve gait patterns



Future Directions – Travel & Accessibility

There's much more to be done when it comes to accessible travel for wheelchair users. Various barriers were noted including:

- Inaccessibility in "handicap accessible" hotel rooms
- Long waits for wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs)
- Challenges navigating city infrastructure
- Inconsistent airline staff training and behaviors
- Poorly designed airplane aisle chairs
 - Efforts were made to contact Cleveland Hopkins, American Airlines, and United to inquire about aisle chair manufacturers to suggest design changes to enhance fit, positioning, skin integrity, and comfort during the boarding process



Key References

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