

## **It's about Sensing Something Different: A Qualitative Study on Patients' Experiences of Physical Therapy Intervention in the Treatment of Severe Non-suicidal Self-injury**

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**Background:** Patients with severe non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) are primarily treated with psychological and pharmacological treatments with some, yet not sufficient effect; thus there is a need for trying out new treatment modalities. Further, exploring bodily symptoms in patients with NSSI could deepen the understanding of these patients' difficulties.

**Aim:** Partly to explore bodily symptoms in patients with NSSI, and partly to explore the experiences of patients with severe NSSI receiving physical therapy during hospitalization. Methods Hospitalized patients with severe NSSI were offered physical therapy and were invited to participate in individual in-depth interviews on bodily symptoms and their experiences of physical therapy. Interviews were analysed using qualitative content analyses and using systematic condensation of text into meaningful themes.

**Results:** In all, 7 patients participated in interviews. Two main themes Bodily discomfort and Focus on own body with the following subthemes restlessness, increased tension, feeling disconnected with own body, and self-injury as coping and distraction, calming down, reducing self-injury, and sensing too much, respectively emerged from the analyses.

**Conclusion:** Experiences of physical discomfort seem closely related to self-injury in patients with severe non-suicidal self-injury. Physical therapy was experienced as useful for distracting from negative thoughts and emotions as well as for calming restlessness and tension.

**Keywords:** Self-injury, physical therapy, qualitative research

