

Weight management interventions for people with spinal cord injury: A systematic review and qualitative synthesis.

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Nearly **70%** of adults with spinal cord injury (SCI) are obese and are at two-to-three times higher risk for developing related co-morbidities (type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease) than those without SCI.

People with SCI demonstrate **~40%** less engagement in physical activity compared to those without SCI.

OBJECTIVES:

To examine the effectiveness of weight management interventions for people with SCI and to synthesise the experiences of people involved with SCI weight management (e.g., SCI healthcare professionals (HCPs) and caregivers).

SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS

Quantitative appraisal

- Weight loss interventions in this population *can* lead to moderate weight loss.
- Yet only just over a third of individuals achieved a clinically meaningful 5% weight loss.

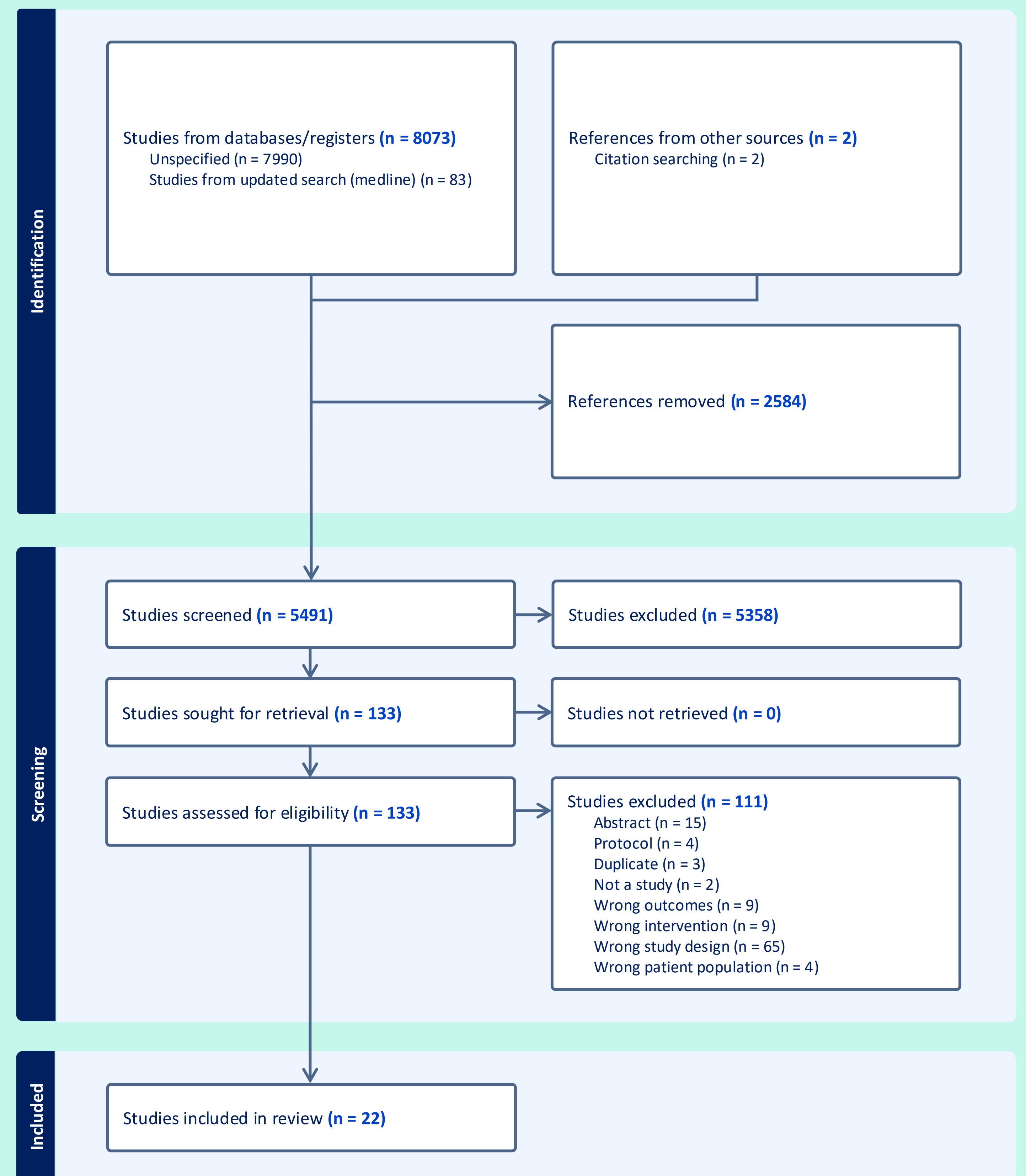


Qualitative synthesis

- Both people with SCI and HCPs highlighted the difficulty in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight in this population.
- Barriers to weight management interventions included reduced physical activity levels and lack of access to suitable exercise or weighing equipment.
- Many HCPs did not consider weight management a priority in clinical SCI care.
- HCPs did not feel confident in supporting or advising their patients regarding weight management.

METHODS

Five databases were searched (up to 31st July 2023) using terms relating to SCI and weight management.



Included studies were individual RCTs (n = 2), an RCT with a case series (n = 1), pre-post studies (n = 8) and qualitative studies (n = 11).
Note. RCT = randomised control trial.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE:

Current interventions for people with SCI need to be improved and/or alternative interventions developed to ensure more individuals experience a clinically meaningful weight loss.

CLINICAL RELEVANCE OF OUTCOMES:

- Much more research is needed into how to guide weight management in individuals with SCI and share the findings.
- There is a need to create greater awareness during clinical training of HCPs to help them understand and be confident with implementing weight management strategies for persons with SCI.
- We must continue to overcome the barriers to weight management in persons with SCI (e.g., provide access to wheelchair accessible scales in our SCI units).

FUTURE RESEARCH PRIORITY: Consolidation of SCI-specific BMI classifications and their application to this population is much needed.

