

AWARD NUMBER: W81XWH-17-1-0696

TITLE: Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers Among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: John O'Neill, PhD

CONTRACTING ORGANIZATION: Kessler Foundation

REPORT DATE: October 2020

TYPE OF REPORT: Annual Report

PREPARED FOR: U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command
Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: Approved for Public Release;
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE
OCTOBER 2020

2. REPORT TYPE
Annual Report

3. DATES COVERED
30SEPT2019 - 29SEPT2020

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers Among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
W81XWH-17-1-0696

5b. GRANT NUMBER
SC160165

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)
John O'Neill, PhD

5d. PROJECT NUMBER

5e. TASK NUMBER

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

E-Mail: JONeill@KesslerFoundation.org

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
KESSLER FOUNDATION, INC.
120 EAGLE ROCK AVE, STE 100
EAST HANOVER, NJ 07936-3147

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command
Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

Spinal cord injury (SCI) is a sudden and debilitating injury that results in chronic paralysis, sensory and motor loss, impaired functioning, and drastically altered quality of life (QOL). The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is the single largest SCI healthcare provider in the nation, offering a full range of rehabilitation care services to nearly 26,000 Veterans with SCI and SCI specialty care to about 13,000 of these Veterans. The Spinal Cord Injury Model Systems (SCIMS) treats an estimated 878 Veterans with SCI. Although the number of SCI/D cases is relatively small compared to many other chronic conditions, SCI/D is a complex condition with costs that are 6.5 times greater than the average Veteran receiving VA healthcare. Kessler Foundation with the University of New Hampshire conducted the 2015 Kessler Foundation National Employment and Disability Survey (KFNEDES) to examine ways that people with disabilities seek and maintain employment. KFNEDES findings indicate that people with disabilities are striving to work and overcoming barriers to work. The goal of the current project is to extend the KFNEDES to Veterans with spinal cord injury (SCI) and further our understanding of the KFNEDES findings by exploring employment barrier experiences encountered by Veterans with SCI who are striving to work and the strategies used to overcome employment barriers.

Research is needed to guide care provided in VHA and SCIMS that improves functioning and reduces handicap, so Veterans can resume meaningful social participation in basic activities of life like employment. Specific Aims: Aim 1 (Phase 1). To examine the social validity of the 2015 KFNEDES survey questions and findings in a sample of Veterans with an SCI who are striving to work. Aim 2 (Phase 2). To understand the perceptions and experiences of Veterans with SCI who are striving to work while confronting employment barriers and finding strategies used to overcome these barriers. Aim 3 (Phase 3). To compare the employment barriers and strategies used among Veterans with an SCI who are striving to work with the 2015 KFNEDES nationally representative sample of persons with disabilities. Aim 4 (Phase 4). To develop consumer informed recommendations and actions-plans for evidenced-based VA employment intervention initiatives and civilian vocational rehabilitation programs serving Veterans with SCI. Study Design: We propose a three-year qualitative study that leverages the strength of the KFNEDES findings, focusing on Veterans from the SCIMS and the James A. Haley Veteran's Hospital, using focus groups, cognitive interviews, and semi-structured interviews. These three qualitative data collection methods will be implemented at both sites over four sequential phases of data collection. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews with Veterans will explore their perceptions and experiences with employment barriers and strategies used to overcome barriers. Then we will modify the KFNEDES for Veterans with SCI and conduct semi-structured interviews and Veterans version of the KFNEDES (KFNEDES-VS). Finally, we will integrate findings across methodologies to prepare employment service guidelines.

The information gathered from the proposed study will be used for programmatic development and to inform interventions that will address modifiable factors that impact SCI Veterans who are striving to work and overcoming employment barriers. Addressing employment barriers is paramount to quality of life for Veterans after an SCI. This proposal responds directly to the issues, barriers, and promoters of success for Veterans after an SCI that are specified in the FY16 Areas of Encouragement and SCIRP. Knowledge gained from the proposed work may be used to support the VA's 2016 Therapeutic and Supported Employment Services transformation plan which promotes "evidence-informed employment services and prioritizes community-based competitive employment" as a primary goal for Veterans with mental and/or physical impairments.

Of the more than 250,000 Americans with SCI, approximately 42,000 are Veterans. The factors that contribute to employment barriers are not well understood, particularly as it pertains to Veterans living with SCI. The proposed project will provide important information about Veterans with SCI who are striving to work and the strategies used to overcome employment barriers. These findings will also assist the VHA mission to provide specialized services to veterans with disabilities, hence, supporting the VA strategic objective (1.1) to improve Veteran wellness and economic security.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

Spinal Cord Injury; Employment; Employment Barriers; Employment Facilitators; Striving to Work;

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:

a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified

17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT

Unclassified

18. NUMBER OF PAGES

30

19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
USAMRMC

19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

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1. INTRODUCTION

While it is well documented that persons with Spinal Cord Injury (SCI), including Veterans, experience multiple barriers while job seeking, the research has almost exclusively focused on the barriers or factors that hinder achieving employment goals rather than strategies that lead to employment. Kessler Foundation and University of New Hampshire recently conducted the population based 2015 Kessler Foundation National Employment and Disability Survey (KFNEDS) to examine ways that people with disabilities seek and maintain employment. KFNEDS findings indicate that people with disabilities are striving to work and overcoming barriers to work. Since these results are reported across all disability conditions, how they translate to a population of Veterans with SCI is unknown. Few SCI employment studies have examined strategies used by Veterans with SCI to overcome employment barriers. The goal of this project is to extend the KFNEDS to Veterans with SCI and further the understanding of the KFNEDS findings by exploring employment barrier experiences encountered by Veterans with SCI who are striving to work and the strategies used to overcome employment barriers. This mixed-method study will bring together scientists from Kessler Foundation and James A. Haley Veterans Hospital to: 1) examine how Veterans with SCI strive to work and overcome employment barriers and 2) compare ways in which Veterans with SCI treated in the VHA and SCIMS strive to work and overcome employment barriers.

2. KEYWORDS

Spinal Cord Injury; Employment; Employment Barriers; Employment Facilitators; Striving to Work

3. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

a. What were the major goals of the project?

Please see *Table 1: Statement of Work 2018 - 2020*

b. What was accomplished under these goals?

Please See *Table 1: Statement of Work: 2018 – 2020 and narrative that follows*

Table 1: Statement of Work (SOW): 2018-2020 Tasks

	Timeline	Research Sites	
		KF	JAH
Aim 1: Examine the social validity of the 2015 KFNEDS questions and findings in a sample of Veterans with an SCI who are striving to work.			
Major Task 1: Preparing to launch study			
Subtask 1: Obtain IRB approval			
Submit amendments, adverse events and protocol deviations		Ongoing	Ongoing
Major Task 2: Develop and pre-test KFNEDS-VS survey and semi-structured interview questions			
Subtask 1: Recruit participants for focus groups			
<i>Milestone Achieved: screened, recruited and enrolled 10 per focus group (1-2 focus group per site)</i>	12/31/2018	Completed	Completed
Subtask 2: Conduct 1 focus group per site and analyze transcripts			
<i>Milestone Achieved: focus groups conducted</i>	04/01/2019	Completed	Completed
<i>Milestone Achieved: focus group data analyzed</i>	09/29/2019	Completed	Completed
Present focus group results at professional conference(s)	11/08/2019	Completed	Completed
Subtask 3: Prepare and pre-test KFNEDS-VS survey and semi-structured interview questions			
KFNEDS-VS survey and semi-structured interview questions drafted by study team	09/01/2019	Completed	Completed
Pre-test KFNEDS-VS survey and semi-structured interview questions with CAB members	09/15/2019	Completed	Completed

Finalize KFNEDS-VS and semi-structured interview questions for cognitive testing	10/22/2019	Completed	Completed
<i>Milestone Achieved: KFNEDS-VS and semi-structured interview questions approved by IRBs for cognitive testing (Ph2)</i>	11/01/2019	Completed	Completed
Subtask 4: Recruit participants and complete cognitive interviews			
Screen, recruit, and enroll 5 participants per site for cognitive interviews	12/31/2019	Completed	Completed
<i>Milestone Achieved: Cognitive interview of the VS survey and semi-structured interview questions conducted</i>	12/31/2019	Completed	Completed
<i>Milestone Achieved: Cognitive interview of the VS survey and semi-structured interview questions analyzed</i>	01/31/2020	Completed	Completed
CAB reviews results of focus groups and cognitive interview	01/31/2020	Completed	Completed
Subtask 5: Update/revise KFNEDS-VS survey and semi-structured interview questions (for Phase 3)			
Study team update and revise KFNEDS-SCI survey and semi-structured interview questions	02/15/2020	Completed	Completed
CAB review and pre-test Phase 3 materials/protocol (questionnaires, KFNEDS-SCI survey, and semi-structured interview questions)	02/28/2020	Completed	Completed
<i>Milestone Achieved: Phase 3 materials approved by IRBs</i>	03/31/2020	Completed	Completed
Present cognitive interview results at professional conference(s)	TBD		
Aim 2: Understand experiences of Veterans with SCI who are striving to work and overcoming barriers.			
Major Task 3: Conduct KFNEDS-SCI survey & semi-structured interviews			
Subtask 1: Identify and screen participants to assess striving status for KFNEDS-VS survey and semi-structured interview			
<i>Milestone Achieved: identified and screened approximately 20-25 Veterans per site to complete the KFNEDS-VS survey and semi-structured interviews</i>	06/01/2020	Pending 12/01/2020	Completed
Subtask 2: Conduct KFNEDS-VS surveys and semi-structured interviews			
<i>Milestone Achieved: 20-25 KFNEDS-VS surveys and semi-structured interviewed conducted (at each site)</i>	06/30/2020	Pending 12/30/2020	Completed
Subtask 3: Conduct qualitative analyses stratified on specific research questions to examine potential group differences in experiences, and strategies associated with overcoming employment barriers.			
<i>Milestone Achieved: Qualitative analyses completed</i>	9/30/2020	Pending 02/28/2021	Pending 02/28/2021
CAB reviews results of qualitative analyses and proposal of professional presentations	11/30/2020	03/15/2021	03/15/2021
Present results of qualitative analyses at professional conference(s)	TBD		
Aim 4: Develop consumer informed actions-plans for evidenced-based VA employment intervention and civilian vocational rehabilitation programs serving Veterans with SC			
Major Task 5: Employment Program Guideline Development and Dissemination			
Subtask 1: Triangulate qualitative and quantitative data from all of the study phases			
<i>Milestone Achieved: Triangulation analyses completed; most frequently cited barriers identified, best strategies identified, etc.</i>	12/30/2020	Completed	Completed
Subtask 2: Conduct 1 follow-up focus group per site with 6- 8 per site to evaluate most frequently cited employment barriers and strategies to overcome barriers for Veterans with an SCI.			
Study team develops and finalizes materials for follow-up focus group	12/30/2020	Completed	Completed
<i>Milestone Achieved: follow-up focus group materials approved by IRBs</i>	01/15/2021	Completed	Completed
<i>Milestone Achieved: Follow-up focus group conducted with approximately 6-8 previous participants from each site</i>	01/31/2021	Completed	Completed

<i>Milestone Achieved: Follow-up focus groups data analyzed</i>	02/28/2021	Pending 11/30/2020	Pending 11/30/2020
Subtask 3: Develop consumer informed action-plans [with CAB]			
CAB reviews results of follow-up focus group data and begins development of action plan with study team	03/30/2021	Pending 12/20/2020	Pending 12/20/2020
Study team drafts action plans and practice and policy recommendations	04/30/2021	Pending 01/20/2021	Pending 01/20/2020

Accomplishment Narrative: Year 3

The foci in the last year have been on Major Task 2: Develop and pre-test KFNEDS-VS survey and semi-structured interview questions; Major Task 3: Conduct KFNEDS-SCI survey & semi-structured interviews and; Major Task 5: Employment Program Guideline Development and Dissemination.

Major Task 2: Develop and Pre-test KFNEDS-VS Survey and Semi-structured Interview Questions

Kessler complete 5 cognitive interviews and Tampa complete 4 interviews. Data management (cleaning and analysis) of cognitive interviews has been completed, and revisions of the KFNEDS-VS and Semi-Structured Interview scripts have been made. More specifically, we re-consented focus group participants from Phase 1 to participate in cognitive interviews. Participants responded to and cognitively tested select items included in the KFNEDS-Veteran Survey Revised and semi-structured interview. Each cognitive interview had a primary interviewer (co-investigator) and note-taker (study coordinator) who conducted the cognitive interviews. For each item, three main topics were addressed: 1) what participants thought about when answering; 2) ease of answering the question and the sufficiency of the response set; and 3) importance of the question for Veterans living with an SCI. For selected items, questions about potentially problematic words or phrases identified in development were added to the standard set of questions for feedback. Interviewers also recorded additional notes of the discussion and occasionally included “impressions” of the response of the participant they observed, such as hesitating or strong reactions. Interviewers and note takers also made process notes about their impressions of the administration of the items and respondent’s interview as a whole. Interviewers and note takers made a recommendation for each item whether to “keep as is” “delete” or “modify” and describe how, based on interview feedback. All cognitive interviews were digitally audio-recorded. Interviewers and note-takers used recordings to record notes for probes/questions for each item, which were then entered into an electronic database. The research team held meetings to review participant feedback, interview and note-takers process notes to determine the outcome of each item that was administered and cognitively tested: “keep as is” “delete” or “modify” each item (see appendix 2 for modified KFNEDS-VS and semi-structured interview).

Major Task 3: Conduct KFNEDS-SCI Survey & Semi-structured Interviews

With our modified KFNEDS-VS and semi-structured interviews we recruited, consented participants and administered the KFNEDS-VS and semi-structured interviews. Various recruitment efforts have been used at our two sites. Tampa has been recruiting from a 600+ mailing list they maintain. Three rounds of letters were sent for a total of 600 recruitment letters. In addition, Tampa staff have contacted SCI clinical providers including vocational staff at Tampa VAH to identify potential participants. Kessler Foundation staff have recruited Veterans from their pool of Norther New Jersey Spinal Cord Model Systems participants. Kessler Foundation staff also sent IRB approved recruitment flyers to three other Spinal Cord Injury Model Systems (SCIMS) in Pittsburg, Denver and Michigan that tend to have large numbers of Veterans on their roles. Tampa and Kessler staff contacted Community Action Board (CAB) members to request their assistance in recruiting potential participants. One CAB member reached out to Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) and brokered a meeting with Kessler staff the result of which was PVA agreeing to recruit through their Paving Access to Veterans Employment (PAVE) program. At Tampa 519 individuals were recruited, 24 screened, 24 consented and 23 participants have complete interviews. At Kessler 59 individuals were recruited, 21 screened, 12 consented and 12 participants have complete interviews. All interviews were tape recorded. Kessler interviews were transcribed and cleaned for analysis. Transcription of Tampa’s interviews has been delayed.

Major Task 5: Employment Program Guidelines Development and Dissemination

A preliminary analyses was completed triangulating the KFNEDS-VS and semi-structured interview results identifying frequently cited barriers while looking for work and at work and the best strategies for overcoming those barriers. This analysis was conducted to prepare materials to conduct a follow-up focus group at each site with 6- 8 participants per site to evaluate most frequently cited employment barriers and strategies to overcome barriers for Veterans with an SCI (see appendix 3 for focus group Power Point). A CAB meeting was held at each site to prepare for the focus groups. CAB members reviewed our Power Point presentation and made valuable suggestions regarding the structure and content of our focus group material that we incorporated in the focus group sessions. A total of 9 Veterans participated in these focus groups (4 at Kessler and 5 at Tampa).

c. What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

To date, KF study team members have completed required TMS training modules required to obtain and/or maintain WOC status with JAH. No other opportunities for training have occurred during this reporting period.

d. How were the results disseminated to communities of interest?

Several presentations were prepared and accepted to professional conferences. This year the research team has presented findings at several venues: 1) 2019 HSR&D/QUERI National Conference: Innovation to Impact: Research to Advance VA's Learning Healthcare Community, Washington, D.C; 2) ACRM 97th Annual Conference, Chicago, IL and; 3) PVA Summit + Expo, August 13 – 15, 2020.

e. What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

The study team at Kessler Foundation will continue to recruit, screen, consent and interview participants to obtain at least 8 additional KFNEDS-VS and semi-structured interviews to yield a total of at least 20 participants. Scientists at both sites will continue to conduct preliminary analyses of the KFNEDS-VS and semi-structured interviews in preparation for CAB review of results from the comprehensive qualitative analyses. After CAB members have provided their input on the results, scientists will prepare several papers to be submitted for publication. Potential papers include: 1) evolution of the KFNEDS (methodological paper); 2) barriers and facilitators while looking for work and at work; 3) consumer informed action-plans and; 4) striving to work during COVID-19.

4. IMPACT**a. What was the impact on the development of the principal discipline(s) of the project?**

Nothing to report for this reporting period.

b. What was the impact on other disciplines?

Nothing to report for this reporting period.

c. What was the impact of technology transfer?

Nothing to report for this reporting period.

d. What was the impact on society beyond science and technology?

Nothing to report for this reporting period.

5. CHANGES/PROBLEMS**a. Changes in approach and reasons for change**

There were no changes in approach.

b. Actual or anticipated problems or delays and actions or plans to resolve them

As presented in the SOW Major Task 3: Conduct KFNEDS-SCI survey & semi-structured interviews has been delayed. Tampa has identified, screened and completed 22 KFNEDS-VS survey and semi-structured interviews meeting their goal for this task. However, Kessler Foundation staff were thus far only able to identify, screen and complete 12 KFNEDS-VS survey and semi-structured interviews missing their goal by at least eight. This caused a delay in fully completing the qualitative analysis. However, we did a preliminary analysis of barriers looking for work and at work and ways of overcoming those barriers. This allowed us to begin work on Major Task 5: Employment Program Guidelines Development and Dissemination by having the CAB review the preliminary results and advise us on how to present the findings to a focus group. The focus group was conducted and we will be analyzing that data during the no cost extension which was approved 09/30/2020 (see appendix 4).

c. Changes that had a significant impact on expenditures

To date, there have been no changes that have had a significant impact on expenditures.

d. Significant changes in use or care of human subjects, vertebrate animals, biohazards, and/or select agents**i. Significant changes in use or care of human subjects**

There have been no significant changes in the use or care of human subjects during this reporting period.

ii. Significant changes in use or care of vertebrate animals

N/A – no animals are being used in this protocol

iii. Significant changes in use of biohazards and/or select agents

N/A – no biohazards are being used in this protocol

6. PRODUCTS**a. Publications, conference papers, and presentations****i. Journal publications**

Nothing to report

ii. Books or other non-periodical, one-time publications

Nothing to report

iii. Other publications, conference papers, and presentations

1. Poster Presentation at ACRM 2019/2020

Fyffe, D., Cotner, B., Hathaway, W., Quinn, A., Ching, D., Ottomanelli, L., & O'Neill, J. (October, 2019) Striving to Work: Experiences of Veterans Living with a Spinal Cord Injury. The ACRM 96th Annual Conference, Chicago, IL.

Fyffe, D., Cotner, B., Hathaway, W., Quinn, A., Ching, D., Ottomanelli, L., & O'Neill, J. (November, 2020) Striving to Work: Experiences of Veterans Living with a Spinal Cord Injury. The ACRM 97th Annual Conference, Chicago, IL.

2. Oral Presentation at HSR&D 2019 and PVA Summit + Expo

Ottomanelli, L., O'Neill, J., Cotner, B., Fyffe, D., Hathaway, W., Ching, D., Quinn, A., & White, K. (October 31, 2019) Striving to Work: A Veteran-Centered Participatory Approach to Identify Strategies to Overcome Employment Barriers. Oral Presentation at the 2019 HSR&D/QUERI National Conference: Innovation to Impact: Research to Advance VA's Learning Healthcare Community, Washington, D.C.

Denise C. Fyffe; Bridget A. Cotner; Wendy Hathaway; Ashleigh Quinn; Deveney Ching; Lisa Ottomanelli; John O'Neill (2020) Developing a Veteran-Specific Employment Survey: Lessons Veterans Living with SCI. PVA Summit + Expo, August 13 – 15, 2020. (proposal accepted but conference cancelled)

b. Websites(s) or other Internet site(s)

Nothing to report

c. Technologies or techniques

Nothing to report

d. Inventions, patent applications, and/or licenses

Nothing to report

e. Other products

Nothing to report.

7. PARTICIPANTS & OTHER COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

a. What individuals have worked on the project?

Name:	John O'Neill, PhD
Project Role:	Principal Investigator (KF)
Research Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	N/A
Nearest person month worked:	1.2

Contribution to Project:	Dr. O'Neill leads the project at KF and oversees all research related activities across both study sites. He leads bi-weekly study team meetings and CAB meetings. He initiates submissions to the IRB, HRPO, as well as the Quarterly and Annual reports. He has led the development of study related materials, including questionnaires, scripts, recruitment materials, and the procedural logistics, as well as data analysis. He has obtained WOC status at JAH, including completing all required TMS training modules.
Funding Support:	N/A

Name:	Lisa Ottomanelli, PhD
Project Role:	Principal Investigator (JAH)
Research Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	0000-0003-0032-2969
Nearest person month worked:	N/A
Contribution to Project:	Dr. Ottomanelli leads the study team at the Tampa Site overseeing submissions to the IRB, interactions with CAB and the development of study materials, including questionnaires, scripts, recruitment materials, and the procedural logistics. She has assisted in overseeing the analysis of data at the Tampa Site.
Funding Support:	N/A

Name:	Denise Fyffe, PhD
Project Role:	Co-Investigator (KF)
Research Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	N/A
Nearest person month worked:	1.68
Contribution to Project:	Dr. Fyffe has contributed to the development of study related materials, including questionnaires, scripts, recruitment materials, and the procedural logistics. Dr. Fyffe has also contributed to the analysis of Phase 1 data and development of interviews and materials for Phase 2. He has obtained WOC status at JAH, including completing all required TMS training modules.
Funding Support:	N/A

Name:	Bridget Cotner, PhD
Project Role:	Co-investigator, Health Science Specialist, Anthropologist (JAH)
Research Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	0000-0001-9312-7294
Nearest person month worked:	2.4
Contribution to Project:	Dr. Cotner has assisted with preparation for data collection including development of interview guides, recruitment materials and processes, and analysis. Dr. Cotner has also contributed to the analysis of Phase 1 data and development of interviews and materials for Phase 2.
Funding Support:	N/A

Name:	Kevin White, MD
Project Role:	Co-Investigator (JAH)
Research Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	
Nearest person month worked:	N/A
Contribution to Project:	Dr. White has developed the procedures for recruiting participants
Funding Support:	N/A

Name:	Conner Clark
Project Role:	Research Assistant
Research Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	N/A
Nearest person month worked:	1
Contribution to Project:	Developing data collection tools and instruments, data management and analysis
Funding Support:	N/A

Name:	Deveney Ching
Project Role:	Research Coordinator (JAH)
Research Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):	0000-0002-1578-6021
Nearest person month worked:	2.4
Contribution to Project	Ms. Ching works with Kessler Foundation Research Coordinator to ensure flow between sites, assists the PI and co-investigators with research tasks, assists with scheduling of study-related procedures, assists with preparations of IRB and HPRO submissions, and assists with data collection and analysis as needed.
Funding Support:	N/A

b. Has there been a change in the active other support of the PD/PI(s) or senior/key personnel since the last reporting period?

There have been no changes in the active other support of any key personnel since the last reporting period.

c. What other organizations were involved as partners?

Organization Name:	James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital								
Location of Organization:	13000 Bruce B. Downs Boulevard Tampa, FL 33612								
Partner's contribution to the project: <input type="checkbox"/> <i>(check all that apply)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Financial support <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;">In-kind support</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facilities</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Personnel exchanges</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Other (please describe): N/A</td> </tr> </table>	Financial support <input type="checkbox"/>	In-kind support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration	Personnel exchanges		Other (please describe): N/A	
Financial support <input type="checkbox"/>	In-kind support								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration								
Personnel exchanges									
Other (please describe): N/A									

8. SPECIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

a. COLLABORATING AWARDS

N/A

b. QUAD CHARTS

See Appendix 1

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Quad Chart

Appendix 2: KFNEDES-VS and Semi-structured Interview

Appendix 3: Focus Group Power Point

Appendix 4: No Cost Extension

Appendix 1

Quad Chart



PI: John O'Neill, PhD

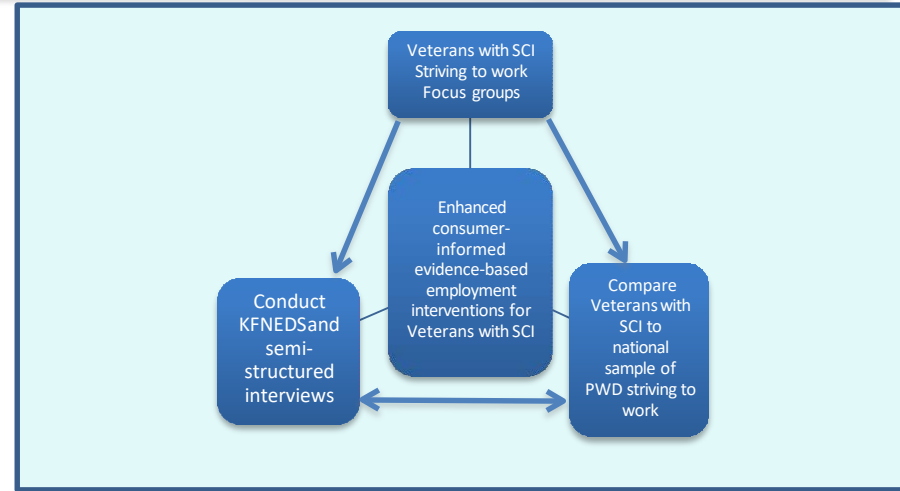
Org: Kessler Foundation

Award Amount: \$663,523

Study/Product Aim(s)

- Aim 1** Examine the social validity of the 2015 KFNEDES questions and findings in a sample of Veterans with an SCI who are striving to work.
- Aim 2** Understand experiences of Veterans with SCI who are striving to work and overcoming barriers.
- Aim 3** To compare employment barriers and strategies used to overcome barriers among Veterans with an SCI with 2015 KFNEDES nationally representative sample of persons.
- Aim 4** Develop consumer informed actions-plans for evidenced-based VA employment intervention and civilian vocational rehabilitation programs serving Veterans with SCI.

A qualitative study using focus groups, cognitive interviews and semi-structured interviews will be conducted at 2 sites over four sequential phases of data collection. Results from each phase will be analyzed separately and merged to inform subsequent phases and the development of employment recommendations for dissemination.



Accomplishments: Cognitive interviews of KFNEDES-VS survey and semi-structured interview questions prepared and pre-tested

Timeline and Cost

Activities	CY	17	18	19	20
Launch study & examine social validity of 2015 KFNEDES for Veterans with an SCI		█	█		
Understand how Veterans with SCI are striving to work			█	█	█
Compare striving to work among Veterans with SCI to a national sample of people with disabilities (this activity has been discontinued)				█	
Develop consumer-informed evidence-based employment interventions					█
Estimated Budget (\$K)		\$172,567.95	\$169,669.22	\$204,674.49	

Goals/Milestones

CY17 Major Task 1: Preparing to launch study

- ✓ Obtain Local IRB approval at Kessler
- ✓ Obtain local IRB approval at Tampa VA
- ✓ Obtain HRPO approval for all protocols

CY18 Major Task 2: Develop and pre-test KFNEDES-VS survey and semi-structured interview questions

- ✓ Two focus groups conducted and data analyzed
- ✓ Cognitive interviews of the KFNEDES-VS survey and semi-structured interview questions conducted and analyzed
- ✓ KFNEDES-VS survey and semi-structured interview prepared and pre-tested

CY19 Major Task 3: Conduct KFNEDES-SCI survey & semi-structured interviews

- ✓ Conduct KFNEDES-VS surveys and semi-structured interviews
- Complete quantitative and qualitative analyses
- ✓ Disseminate study findings at professional conferences

CY20 Major Task 4: Conduct comparative analyses of open-ended responses, Veterans with SCI versus 2015 KFNEDES participants

- Qualitative comparative analyses completed and results disseminated

CY20 Major Task 5: Employment program guideline development & dissemination

- Practice & Policy Recommendations generated from study findings

Budget Expenditure to Date:

Projected: Expenditure: \$633,523
Actual Expenditure: \$501,077

Appendix 2

KFNEDS-VS and Semi-structured Interview

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Introduction:

“This survey will ask you questions about your employment experiences as a Veteran living with spinal cord injury. We would like to learn about your experiences working or trying to find work. We will also ask you questions about employment barriers and the ways you may have addressed these barriers while working or looking for work.

“As a reminder, you may refuse to answer any question you aren’t comfortable answering”

Employment Screen (ESCR)

ESCR1 [ESCR1]

I am now going to ask some questions about your work experiences.

Are you currently working at a job for pay, including self-employment?

- 1 YES → **SKIP TO ESCR3**
- 2 NO → **ASK ESCR2**
- 98 DON'T KNOW → **REREAD QUESTION**
- 99 REFUSED

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Employment Screen (ESCR)

ESCR2 [ESCR2]

Have you ever worked at a job for pay, including self-employment since your SCI?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO
- 98 DON'T KNOW → **REREAD QUESTION**
- 99 REFUSED

ESCR2a

Were you looking for work after the year 2000?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO
- 98 DON'T KNOW → **REREAD QUESTION**
- 99 REFUSED

ESCR3 [ESCR3]

If currently working: Have you been actively looking for a different job in the past year?

If not currently working: Have you been actively looking for work in the past year?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO
- 98 DON'T KNOW → **REREAD QUESTION**
- 99 REFUSED

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Disability (DIS)

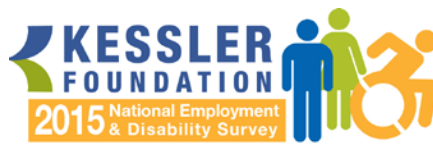
DIS-SCI1

Have you experienced any of the following SCI-related secondary health conditions? [MARK ALL THAT APPLY]

SCI-RELATED SECONDARY HEALTH CONDITIONS

1	Pressure Sores	<i>These develop as a skin rash or redness and progress to an infected sore. Also called skin ulcer, bedsores, and decubitus ulcers.</i>
2	Injury caused by loss of sensation	<i>Injury may occur because of a lack of sensation, such as burns from carrying hot liquids in the lap or sitting too close to a heater or fire</i>
3	Muscle spasms	<i>Spasticity refers to uncontrolled, jerky muscle movements, such as uncontrolled muscle twitch or spasm. Often spasticity increases with infection or some kind of restriction.</i>
4	Contractures	<i>A contracture is a limitation in range of motion caused by a shortening of the soft tissue around a joint, such as an elbow or hip. This occurs when a joint cannot move frequently enough through its range of motion. Pain often accompanies this problem.</i>
5	Heterotropic bone ossification	<i>This is an overgrowth of bone, often occurring after a fracture. Early signs include a loss of range of motion, local swelling and warmth at the area to the touch. This condition must be diagnosed by a physician.</i>
6	Diabetes mellitus	<i>Diabetes is a problem resulting from irregularities in blood sugar level. Symptoms include frequent urination and excessive thirst. This condition is diagnosed by a physician.</i>
7	Bladder dysfunction	<i>Incontinence, bladder or kidney stones, kidney problems, urine leakage and urine back up are all symptoms of bladder dysfunction. NOTE: There is a separate item for urinary tract infections</i>
8	Bowel dysfunction	<i>Diarrhea, constipation, "accidents," and associated problems are signs of bowl dysfunction</i>
9	Urinary tract infections	<i>This includes infections such as cystitis and pseudomonas. Symptoms include pain when urinating, a burning sensation throughout the body, blood in the urine and cloudy urine.</i>

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

10	Sexual dysfunction	<i>This includes dissatisfaction with sexual functioning. Causes for dissatisfaction can be decreased sensation, changes in body image, difficulty in movement, and problems with bowel or bladder, like infections.</i>
11	Autonomic dysreflexia	<i>Autonomic dysreflexia, sometimes called hyperreflexia, results from interferences in the body’s temperature regulating systems. Symptoms of dysreflexia include sudden rises in blood pressure and sweating, skin blotches, goosebumps, pupil dilation and headache. It can also occur as the body’s response to pain where an individual doesn’t experience sensation.</i>
12	Postural hypotension	<i>This involves a strong sensation of lightheadedness following a change in position. It is caused by a sudden drop in blood pressure.</i>
13	Circulatory problems	<i>Circulatory problems involve the swelling of veins, feet, or the occurrence of blood clots.</i>
14	Respiratory problems	<i>Symptoms of respiratory infections or problems include difficulty in breathing and increased secretions.</i>
15	Chronic pain	<i>This is usually experienced as chronic tingling, burning, or dull aches. It may occur in an area that has little to no feeling.</i>
16	Joint and muscle pain	<i>This includes pain in specific muscle groups or joints. People who must overuse a particular muscle group, such as shoulder muscles, or who put too much strain on their joints are at risk of developing pain.</i>
17	Problems with mood	<i>This includes feeling down, depressed, worried, or nervous</i>
18	Did not experience any SCI-related health conditions	<i>None</i>
19	Other	[COMPLETE DIS-SCI1a]

DIS-SCI1a

Please specify other SCI-related health condition you experience.

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

**KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview**

Disability (DIS)

DIS-SCI2

Of the SCI related secondary health conditions you mentioned, which one limits you the MOST?

SELECT ONLY ONE

1	Pressure Sores	<i>These develop as a skin rash or redness and progress to an infected sore. Also called skin ulcer, bedsores, and decubitus ulcers.</i>
2	Injury caused by loss of sensation	<i>Injury may occur because of a lack of sensation, such as burns from carrying hot liquids in the lap or sitting too close to a heater or fire</i>
3	Muscle spasms	<i>Spasticity refers to uncontrolled, jerky muscle movements, such as uncontrolled muscle twitch or spasm. Often spasticity increases with infection or some kind of restriction.</i>
4	Contractures	<i>A contracture is a limitation in range of motion caused by a shortening of the soft tissue around a joint, such as an elbow or hip. This occurs when a joint cannot move frequently enough through its range of motion. Pain often accompanies this problem.</i>
5	Heterotropic bone ossification	<i>This is an overgrowth of bone, often occurring after a fracture. Early signs include a loss of range of motion, local swelling and warmth at the area to the touch. This condition must be diagnosed by a physician.</i>
6	Diabetes mellitus	<i>Diabetes is a problem resulting from irregularities in blood sugar level. Symptoms include frequent urination and excessive thirst. This condition is diagnosed by a physician.</i>
7	Bladder dysfunction	<i>Incontinence, bladder or kidney stones, kidney problems, urine leakage and urine back up are all symptoms of bladder dysfunction. NOTE: There is a separate item for urinary tract infections</i>
8	Bowel dysfunction	<i>Diarrhea, constipation, "accidents," and associated problems are signs of bowel dysfunction</i>
9	Urinary tract infections	<i>This includes infections such as cystitis and pseudomonas. Symptoms include pain when urinating, a burning sensation throughout the body, blood in the urine and cloudy urine.</i>
10	Sexual dysfunction	<i>This includes dissatisfaction with sexual functioning. Causes for dissatisfaction can be decreased sensation, changes in body image, difficulty in movement, and problems with bowel or bladder, like infections.</i>

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

11	Autonomic dysreflexia	<i>Autonomic dysreflexia, sometimes called hyperreflexia, results from interferences in the body’s temperature regulating systems. Symptoms of dysreflexia include sudden rises in blood pressure and sweating, skin blotches, goosebumps, pupil dilation and headache. It can also occur as the body’s response to pain where an individual doesn’t experience sensation.</i>
12	Postural hypotension	<i>This involves a strong sensation of lightheadedness following a change in position. It is caused by a sudden drop in blood pressure.</i>
13	Circulatory problems	<i>Circulatory problems involve the swelling of veins, feet, or the occurrence of blood clots.</i>
14	Respiratory problems	<i>Symptoms of respiratory inflections or problems include difficulty in breathing and increased secretions.</i>
15	Chronic pain	<i>This is usually experienced as chronic tingling, burning, or dull aches. It may occur in an area that has little to no feeling.</i>
16	Joint and muscle pain	<i>This includes pain in specific muscle groups or joints. People who must overuse a particular muscle group, such as shoulder muscles, or who put too much strain on their joints are at risk of developing pain.</i>
17	Problems with mood	<i>This includes feeling down, depressed, worried, or nervous</i>
18	Did not experience any SCI-related secondary health conditions	<i>None</i>
19	Other	<i>[COMPLETE DIS2-SCIa]</i>

DIS-SCI2a

Please specify other SCI related health condition you experience.

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Disability (DIS)

DIS1 [DIS1]

I would like to ask you some questions about difficulties or problems that you may have related to your spinal cord injury or health conditions.

Which of the following apply to you?

READ LIST AND CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- 1 Serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?
- 2 Difficulty hearing?
- 3 Serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
- 4 Any difficulty walking a quarter of a mile - about 3 city blocks?
- 5 Difficulty lifting, carrying, bending or manipulating small objects?
- 6 Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?
- 7 Learning conditions such as ADD, ADHD, dyslexia or others?
- 8 Emotional, psychological or mental health conditions?
- 9 Developmental disability or disorder?
- 10 Some other disability or health condition? → ***COMPLETE DIS1a***
- 11 DON'T KNOW
- 12 REFUSE
- 13 NONE

DIS1a

Please specify other disability or health condition

Subject ID: _____

Date: ____/____/____



Interviewer: ____

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Disability (DIS)

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/___

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Employment Overall (EO)

DIS2 [DIS3a]

Of the disabilities or health conditions you mentioned, which one limits you the MOST?

SELECT ONLY ONE

- 1 VISION
- 2 HEARING
- 3 WALKING
- 4 LIFTING/CARRYING
- 5 CONCENTRATING/LEARNING/EMOTIONAL
- 6 OTHER
- 98 DON'T KNOW
- 99 NA

DIS2a

Please specify other disability or health condition.

E01 [E01]

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Employment Overall (EO)

How important is it for you to be employed? Would you say it is very important ... somewhat important ... not very important ... not at all important?

- 1 VERY IMPORTANT
- 2 SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
- 3 NOT VERY IMPORTANT
- 4 NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT
- 98 DON'T KNOW
- 99 REFUSED

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Employment Overall (EO)

E02 [E02]

If currently working: Currently, about how many total hours per week do you usually work for pay, counting all jobs?

*If **not** currently working: At your last job, how many total hours per week did you usually work for pay, counting all jobs?*

IF NEEDED: "Consider a typical week."

_____ **ENTER NUMBER OF HOURS (01-59)**

- 60 60 OR MORE HOURS
- 98 DON'T KNOW
- 99 REFUSED

Subject ID: _____

Date: ___/___/_____



Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Employment Overall (EO)

E03 [E03]

Do you want to work more hours?

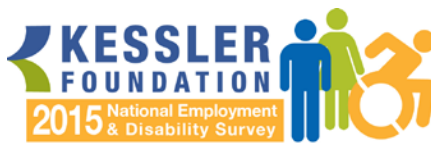
1 YES

2 NO

98 DON'T KNOW

99 REFUSED

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Employment Overall (EO)

E04-1

Occupation BEFORE SCI

E04-1a (before SCI) *What was your occupation (i.e., type of work you did) before your SCI?*

Open ended response: _____

Response coded by the research team:

What would you classify this occupation as [INSERT OCCUPATION FROM SOC LIST]?

(https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#11-0000)

- 11 Management Occupations
- 13 Business and Financial Operations Occupations
- 15 Computer and Mathematical Occupations
- 17 Architecture and Engineering Occupations
- 19 Life, Physical, and Social Science Operations
- 21 Community and Social Service Occupations
- 23 Legal Occupations
- 25 Educational Instruction and Library Occupations
- 27 Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations
- 29 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Operations
- 31 Healthcare Support Occupations
- 33 Protective Service Occupations
- 35 Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations
- 37 Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations
- 39 Personal Care and Service Occupations
- 41 Sales and Related Occupations
- 43 Office and Administrative Support Occupations
- 45 Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations
- 47 Construction and Extraction Occupations

Subject ID: _____



Date: ____/____/____

Interviewer: ____

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

49 Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations

51 Production Operations

53 Transportation and Material Moving Occupations

55 Military Specific Occupations

Subject ID: _____

Date: ___/___/_____



Interviewer: ____

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Employment Overall (EO)

****Interviewer, please list all jobs the individual has had since their SCI, results will be coded by the research team**

E04-1b (after SCI) *What was your occupation since your SCI?*

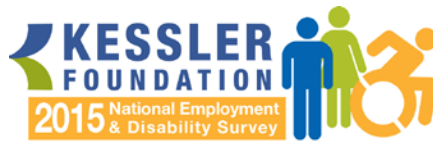
Open ended response:

Response coded by the research team, SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

- What would you classify this occupation as [INSERT OCCUPATION FROM SOC LIST]? (https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#11-0000)

- 11 Management Occupations
- 13 Business and Financial Operations Occupations
- 15 Computer and Mathematical Occupations
- 17 Architecture and Engineering Occupations
- 19 Life, Physical, and Social Science Operations
- 21 Community and Social Service Occupations
- 23 Legal Occupations
- 25 Educational Instruction and Library Occupations
- 27 Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations
- 29 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Operations
- 31 Healthcare Support Occupations
- 33 Protective Service Occupations
- 35 Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations
- 37 Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations

Subject ID: _____



Date: ____/____/____

Interviewer: ____

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

- 39 Personal Care and Service Occupations
- 41 Sales and Related Occupations
- 43 Office and Administrative Support Occupations
- 45 Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations
- 47 Construction and Extraction Occupations
- 49 Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations
- 51 Production Operations
- 53 Transportation and Material Moving Occupations
- 55 Military Specific Occupations

Subject ID: _____

Date: ___/___/_____



Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Employing for Overall (E0)

E05

“Has your employment changed since your SCI occurred?”

- 1 YES
- 2 NO
- 98 DON'T KNOW
- 99 REFUSED

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Looking for Work (LW)

*This next set of questions will ask about your experiences while **preparing for work** and **looking for work** since your spinal cord injury. Please note you will be asked about your experiences **while working** later in the survey. For this next set of questions, we only need you to describe your experiences **preparing for work** and **looking for work** since your spinal cord injury.*

LW1 [LW1]

I am going to read a list of things that people do to prepare or qualify themselves for a job. Since your spinal cord injury, which of these things have you done to help you prepare or qualify for a job?

READ LIST AND SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

- 1 Obtain medical treatment or rehabilitation
- 2 Get an assistive device or special equipment
- 3 Go to a vocational training or job skills training program
- 4 Go to school or college
- 5 Get help with resume writing
- 6 Get help with interviewing
- 7 Volunteer in an organization to learn some skills
- 8 Get computer training (e.g., operating systems, Word, Excel, etc.)
- 9 Plan for transportation (e.g., vehicle modification, plan route, get a ride)
- 10 Get help from friends, family, or other people (e.g., coworkers; Veterans)
- 11 Learn about jobs, careers or skills on my own (e.g., going to the library; online search)
- 12 Get yourself emotionally and mentally prepared to look for work
- 13 Manage SCI related secondary conditions (e.g., bowel/bladder routine)
- 14 Or did you do something else? → **COMPLETE LW1a**

- 15 DON'T KNOW
- 16 NOT APPLICABLE (Did not have to look for a job since SCI)
- 17 REFUSED

LW1a

Please specify what else you did

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

LW2 [LW2]

There are many ways people LOOK FOR jobs. I am going to read a list of ways people look for jobs. Please tell me which of these you are using or have used to look for your current or previous job(s) since your SCI?

READ LIST AND SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

- 1 Looking for and applying for jobs online (*e.g. Monster; Indeed; LinkedIn; USAJobs*)
- 2 Contacting employers directly
- 3 “Word of mouth” through friends, family, or other people (*e.g. coworkers; Veterans*)
- 4 Using a temporary staffing agency
- 5 Using a government agency (*e.g. Department of Labor Career Center*)
- 6 Using a private employment agency (*e.g. headhunter*)
- 7 Using state vocational rehabilitation
- 8 Using community non-profit agencies (*e.g., Jewish Vocational Services; Goodwill*)
- 9 Participating in Veteran specific employment programs [*e.g., VA employment specialists; VA Compensated Work Therapy; VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Education (VR&E, also referred to as using the GI Bill/Chapter 31 benefits offered through VBA; non-profit agencies for Veterans (Wounded Warrior Project; PVA)]*]
- 10 Responding to Human Resources internal postings (*e.g., email/website*)
- 11 Looking in the newspaper
- 12 Or some other method → **COMPLETE LW2a**

- 13 DON’T KNOW
- 14 NOT APPLICABLE (Did not have to look for a job since SCI)
- 15 REFUSED

LW2a

Please specify other agency

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/___

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

LW3 [LW4]

When LOOKING for a job, have you ever experienced any of the following problems or concerns related to your spinal cord injury?

[PROBE] Were you concerned about or did you have problems with...(READ EACH RESPONSE OPTION)

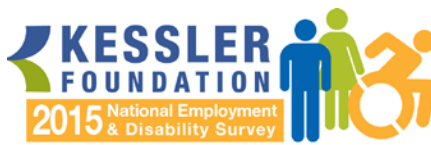
- 1 Not enough education or training
- 2 Lack of job counseling
- 3 Lack of transportation
- 4 Lack of reliable caregiver to assist with activities of daily living (ADLs) (e.g., eating, dressing, transferring) or personal care
- 5 Concern about losing government assistance or benefits (e.g., SSDI and SSI)
- 6 Getting less pay than others in a similar job as you
- 7 Being denied or losing health insurance (e.g., Medicare/Medicaid) or other work-related benefits
- 8 Needing special equipment, tools, or accommodations on the job
- 9 Employers assumed you can't do the job because of your disability (i.e., disability stigma)
- 10 Family members discouraged you from working
- 11 Negative attitudes on the part of supervisors/co-workers (e.g., disability stigma)
- 12 Concerned about missing too much work
- 13 Recurring medical complications (e.g. bowel/bladder accidents; spasticity; pressure ulcers, pain, medication side effects)
- 14 Problems with mood (This includes feeling down, depressed, worried, or nervous)
- 15 Accessibility (e.g., building; parking lot; office)
- 16 Physical and mental effort involved in looking for work
- 17 Or did you face some other problem? → **COMPLETE LW3a**

- 18 DON'T KNOW
- 19 NONE OF THE ABOVE
- 20 NA/REFUSED

LW3a

Please specify other problem

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/___

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

At Work (AW)

*Now, I want to ask about your **employment experiences** since your spinal cord injury. Please try to think only about your experiences **while working** for the next series of questions.*

AW1 [AW1]

*What problems have you faced **WHILE WORKING** that are related to your spinal cord injury?*

[PROBE] Were you concerned about or did you have problems with (READ EACH RESPONSE OPTION)...

READ LIST AND CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- 1 Not enough education or training (*e.g., onboarding training for specific duties; improving job skills*)
- 2 Lack of job counseling
- 3 Lack of advancement or promotion opportunities
- 4 Lack of transportation
- 5 Lack of reliable caregiver to assist with activities of daily living (ADLs) (*e.g., eating, dressing, transferring*) or personal care
- 6 Concern about losing government assistance or benefits (*e.g., SSDI and SSI*)
- 7 Getting less pay than others in a similar job as you
- 8 Being denied or losing health insurance (*e.g., Medicare/Medicaid*) or other work-related benefits
- 9 Needing special equipment, tools, or accommodations to do the job
- 10 Employers assumed you can't do the job because of your disability (*i.e., disability stigma*)
- 11 Family members discouraged you from working
- 12 Negative attitudes on the part of potential supervisors/co-workers (*e.g. disability discrimination*)
- 13 Concern about missing too much work
- 14 Recurring medical complications (*e.g., bowel/bladder accidents; spasticity; pressure ulcers, pain, medication side effects*)
- 15 Problems with mood (*including feeling down, depressed, worried, or nervous*)
- 16 Accessibility (*e.g., building; parking lot; office*)
- 17 Physical and mental effort involved in working
- 18 Or did you have different problems or concerns (*e.g., Veteran status; discrimination*) →

COMPLETE AW1a

- 19 DON'T KNOW
- 20 NONE OF THE ABOVE
- 21 REFUSED

Subject ID: _____



Date: ____/____/____

Interviewer: ____

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

AW1a

Please specify other problem.

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/___

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

At Work (AW)

AW2 [AW4]

If currently working:

“Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job...highly satisfied...somewhat satisfied....neither satisfied or dissatisfied...somewhat dissatisfied...or not satisfied?”

If not currently working:

“Overall, how satisfied were you with your previous job...highly satisfied...somewhat satisfied...neither satisfied or dissatisfied...somewhat dissatisfied...or not satisfied?”

- 1 HIGHLY/VERY SATISFIED
- 2 SOMEWHAT SATISFIED
- 3 NEITHER SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED
- 4 SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED
- 5 HIGHLY/VERY DISSATISFIED

98 DON'T KNOW

99 REFUSED

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

AW3 [AW5]

If currently working:

Do you believe that your spinal cord injury, other disabilities, or health conditions make it difficult for you to change jobs or to advance at your current job?

*If **not** currently working:*

Do you believe that your spinal cord injury, other disabilities, or health conditions make it difficult for you to find a job or to advance at a job?

1 YES

2 NO

IF YES: *Would you say it is....(READ RESPONSE OPTIONS)*

1 HIGHLY/VERY DIFFICULT

2 SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT

3 NEUTRAL

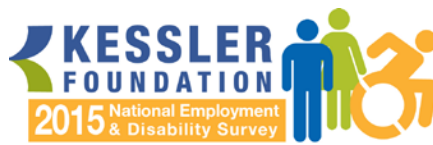
4 SOMEWHAT NOT DIFFICULT

5 HIGHLY/VERY NOT DIFFICULT

98 DON'T KNOW

99 REFUSED

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Workplace Accommodations and Supports (WA)

WA1 [WA]

The next few questions are about workplace accommodations related to your spinal cord injury or health conditions that you may be using, may have used, or may need on the job.

Are you receiving, did you receive, or would you need any of the following accommodations to help you while at work?

READ LIST AND CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- 1 A cell phone or smart phone with specialized features
- 2 A personal computer or tablet with adaptations (*e.g., voice recognition software; modified computer mouse*)
- 3 Building accessibility (*accessible parking, elevators, modified restrooms, handrails*)
- 4 Flexible schedule (*flexible start and end times, work at home, taking more breaks*)
- 5 Modified job duties (*reduced hours, light duty, less demanding job tasks*)
- 6 Assistance with transportation (*e.g., ride to work; transportation training – mapping out the route*)
- 7 A job coach
- 8 A personal care attendant or personal assistant
- 9 Any kind of help from others in the workplace
- 10 Service animal to help with your disability or health condition
- 11 Some other accommodation? → ***COMPLETE WA1a***
- 12 DON'T KNOW
- 13 NONE OF THE ABOVE
- 14 NA/REFUSED

WA1a

Please specify other accommodation or support

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Workplace Accommodations and Supports (WA)

WA2 [WA6]

If currently working: “To what extent does your employer provide accommodations and supports you need to continue working at your current job?”

If not currently working: “To what extent did your employer provide accommodations and supports you needed to continue working at your previous job?”

- 1 ALL
- 2 SOME
- 3 NONE *[If 'NONE' SKIP to WA3]*

- 98 DON'T KNOW
- 99 REFUSED

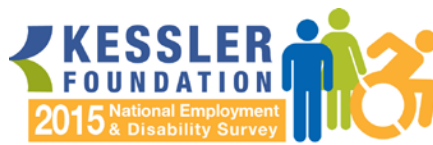
WA2a

How satisfied are you with the job accommodations and supports provided by your employer?

- 1 Very satisfied
- 2 Somewhat satisfied
- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Somewhat dissatisfied
- 5 Very dissatisfied

- 98 DON'T KNOW
- 99 REFUSED

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Workplace Accommodations and Supports (WA)

WA3 [WA7]

If currently working: "Which of the following best describes how you feel about discussing your spinal cord injury or health conditions with others at your current job?"

If not currently working: "Which of the following best describes how you felt about discussing your spinal cord injury or health conditions with others at your previous job(s)?"

READ LIST, SELECT ONE

- 1 You are/were comfortable discussing your disability with others at your job
- 2 You are/were neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
- 3 You are/were not comfortable discussing your disability with others at your job

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

Workplace Accommodations and Supports (WA)

WA4 [WA8]

If currently working: "Do you feel accepted or supported in your current workplace?"

*If **not** currently working: "Did you feel accepted or supported in your previous workplace?"*

1 YES

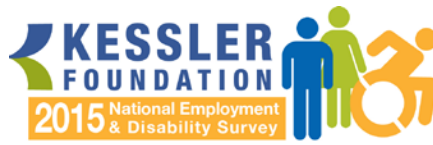
2 NO

98 DON'T KNOW

99 REFUSED

Workplace Accommodations and Supports (WA)

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

WA5 [WA10]

*Can you give me an example of an instance when you **DID NOT FEEL ACCEPTED OR SUPPORTED** in your [current/previous] workplace?*

RECORD RESPONSE VERBATIM

Workplace Accommodations and Supports (WA)

Subject ID: _____



Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer: ___

KFNEDS – SCI Veteran Specific Survey
Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

WA6 [WA9]

*Can you give me an example of an instance when you **FELT ACCEPTED OR SUPPORTED** in your [current/previous] workplace?*

RECORD RESPONSE VERBATIM

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script

Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____ [*introduce yourself*] and this is _____ [*introduce secondary interviews/other team members present*].

Thank you for participating in this semi-structured interview for our project, “**Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury**”. The goal of our project is to learn about Veterans’ experiences looking for work and while working while living with an SCI. There are no right or wrong answers, we want to understand your experiences, so please do not hesitate to share whatever comes to your mind when answering these questions.

As a reminder, we will be taking notes and recording the interview. All of your responses will be kept and only the research team will have access to your responses. If you do not want to answer a question, please let me know and we will move on to the next question.

Before we begin, do you have any questions? [**Answer any questions**]

Great. Let’s begin. I am going to start the recording now.

[INTERVIEWER: TURN ON AUDIOTAPE]

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

A. INTRODUCTION

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

A. Introduction

Not Administered

Interview Question	Response to Interview Question
1a. What does “being employed” mean to you? [PROBE] “What counts as a job to you?”	
1b. What does “being unemployed” mean to you?	
1c. In what ways has COVID-19 effected your job search or current employment?	

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

A. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY AFTER SCI		<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not Administered</i>
Interview Question	Response to Interview Question	
2a. When did you first return to work after your injury? SKIP 2a. IF VETERAN HAS NOT RETURNED TO WORK SINCE SCI, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION #3 (PAGE 6)		
2b. How many jobs for pay have you held since your spinal cord injury?		
2c. [if more than 1 job] What was the transition like moving from one job to the next? [PROBE] What led to the job change?		
2d. Are you doing the same type of work that you were doing before your injury? [PROBE] How is the job you're doing now different from your job that you did before your injury?		

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

A. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY AFTER SCI

Not Administered

Interview Question	Response to Interview Question
<p>3. Describe any employment gap that you had after your SCI.</p> <p>[PROBE - What are some reasons you did or did not have an employment gap?]</p>	

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

A. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY AFTER SCI

Not Administered

Interview Question	Response to Interview Question
<p>4. Tell me about your decision to seek employment?</p> <p>[<i>PROBE</i> – What made you decide to return to work?]</p>	

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

B. CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Now we're going to talk about your current employment status.

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

B. CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Not Administered

Interview Question	Response to Interview Question
5a. Tell me about your current job or most recent since your SCI? [PROBE 1] What is it? [PROBE 2] What do you do? [PROBE 3] How long have you had it?	
5d. In what way is your type of work different from previous jobs you had before your SCI?	

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

[If participant has no history of paid employment since SCI → START INTERVIEW HERE]

C. LOOKING FOR WORK

Now we are going to talk about while preparing for work and looking for work since your spinal cord injury.

We're talking about whether you *were* looking for work in the past or *are* looking for work now.

Please try to think only about your experiences while preparing for work and looking for work for the next series of questions.

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

C. LOOKING FOR WORK

Interview Question	Response to Interview Question
<p>6. Tell me about your job search since your SCI.</p> <p>[PROBE] What kind of resources or tools do you use to help find a job? (vocational rehabilitative service, online, contacting employers directly, recommendations from friends or family, etc.)</p> <p>SKIP #7 IF VETERAN ONLY DESCRIBES 1 CHALLENGE, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION #8 (PAGE 12)</p>	

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

C. LOOKING FOR WORK

Interview Question	Response to Interview Question
<p>7. What was most helpful in finding your current or previous job(s)? / What do you think will be most helpful in finding a job?</p> <p>[PROBE] Is there anything else that was helpful when looking for a job?</p> <p>[ONLY ADMINISTER IF VETERAN INDICATES THAT HE/SHE USED MORE THAN 1 STRATEGY TO LOOK FOR A JOB IN QUESTION #6]</p>	

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

C. LOOKING FOR WORK

Not Administered

Interview Question	Response to Interview Question
<p>8. What were some of the biggest problems that you had (experienced) while looking for work.</p> <p>[PROBE: physical problems; mental preparation “getting your mind right” “believing in yourself - that you can do the job”; structural/environmental (accessibility)]</p> <p>[INSTRUCTIONS: IF VETERAN DOES NOT REPORT ANY CHALLENGES GO TO QUESTION #10 ON PAGE 15]</p>	

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

C. LOOKING FOR WORK		<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not Administered</i>
Interview Question	Response to Interview Question	
9. What are some of the ways you addressed these challenges when looking for a job? [INSTRUCTIONS: IF VETERAN DOES NOT REPORT ANY CHALLENGES SKIP 9A & 9B]		
9a. Which of these strategies work best to address these challenges? [refer to participant response to #8 & #9]		
9b. Which of these strategies did not work well to address these challenges? [refer to participant responses to #8 & #9]		

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

D. WHILE WORKING

Now we are going to talk about your employment experiences since your spinal cord injury.
Please try to think only about your experiences while working for the next series of questions.

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

D. WHILE WORKING		<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not Administered</i>
Interview Question	Response to Interview Question	
10. What challenges have you faced while working? [PROBE] Are there any other challenges you have faced while working?		
10a. What was the main problem that you had (or experienced) while working? Tell me more about that.		

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

D. WHILE WORKING		<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not Administered</i>
Interview Question	Response to Interview Question	
11. What are some of the ways you addressed these challenges while working?		
11a. What helped you address these challenges? [refer to participant responses to #10 & #11]		

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

D. WHILE WORKING

Not Administered

Interview Question	Response to Interview Question
12. What helps you be successful at work?	

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

D. WHILE WORKING

Not Administered

Interview Question	Response to Interview Question
13. Overall, what has working since your SCI meant to you?	

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

E. CLOSING

I have one final question for you before we end the interview.

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

E. CLOSING

Not Administered

Interview Question	Response to Interview Question
14. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences while looking, securing, or maintaining employment since your SCI?	

Subject ID: _____

Primary Interview: __ __

Date: __ __/__ __/__ __ __ __

Interviewer: __ __

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview Script
Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

CLOSING & THANK YOU

Thank you for taking time to answer these questions and for your participation in this project. Your input will help us to make our questions better for the next part of the study.

Do you have any other questions for us? ***[Answer any questions]***

I am now going to turn off the audio recorder.

[INTERVIEWER: TURN OFF AUDIO RECORDER]

[INTERVIEWER: Thank the participant for their time and confirm information regarding compensation and follow-up steps]

Appendix 3

Focus Group Power Point

Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

Phase 4: Follow-up Focus Group

Getting to know you...

- 1. Introduce yourself.**
- 2. Which branch of the military did you serve in the armed forces?**
- 3. Describe your current situation:**
 - Looking for a job: Job search/preparation**
 - Employed: Type of work**

Reminders...

- **Session will be audio-recorded**
- **private**
- **No right or wrong answers**
- **One person to speak at a time
(courteous/recording)**

Overall Project Objectives

To understand your experiences of striving to work and facing employment barriers since your SCI:

(1) barriers to employment

(2) ways to overcome employment barriers

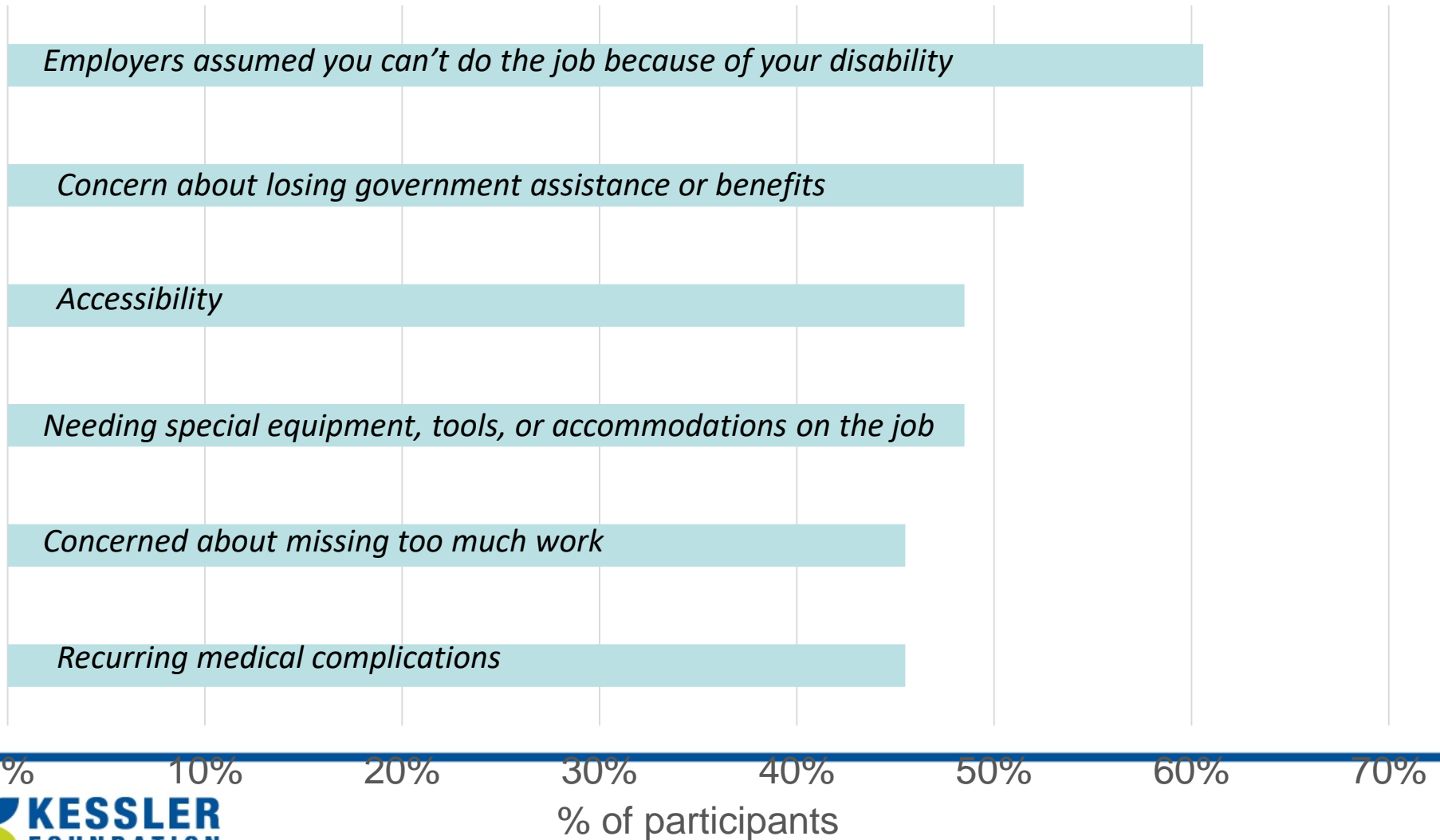
Purpose of the Focus Group

- 1. Review the most frequently cited employment barriers and strategies to overcome barriers for Veterans living with an SCI.**
- 2. Select targets of change for rehabilitation vocational programs.**

Employment Barriers: *Looking for work*

LW3. When looking for a job, have you ever experienced any of the following problems or concerns related to your spinal cord injury? (n=32)	n (%) of participants
<i>Employers assumed you can't do the job because of your disability</i>	20 (60.6%)
<i>Concern about losing government assistance or benefits</i>	17 (51.5%)
<i>Accessibility</i>	16 (48.5%)
<i>Needing special equipment, tools, or accommodations on the job</i>	16 (48.5%)
<i>Concerned about missing too much work</i>	15 (45.5%)
<i>Recurring medical complications</i>	15 (45.5%)

LW3. When looking for a job, have you ever experienced any of the following problems or concerns related to your spinal cord injury? (n=32)



***Looking for work
Barrier 1: Employers
assumed you can't do
the job because of your
disability***

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Barrier 1: Employers assumed you can't do the job because of your disability

Vet 41: Multiple times.

Vet 51: 2 admitted that to me.

**Vet 53: Look at me and see my limping around and asked if I could handle the job.

Vet 54: with first interviews

**Vet 69: People tell me I am unhire-able because I'm uninsurable.

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



High
Priority

Medium
Priority

Low
Priority



High
priority



Medium
priority



Low
priority

Looking for work
Barrier 2: Concern
about losing
government assistance
or benefits

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Barrier 2: Concern about losing government assistance or benefits

Vet 41: I was a little bit concerned about this, but not after I got the job.

Vet 51: in the beginning I did, DAV told me be happy with 10%.

Vet 64: 100% because of unemployability and have limit on how much money I can make. I have an appeal.

Vet 67: I did research and learned that SS was going to go away after a year.
[sounds like a strategy]

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



Looking for work
Barrier 3: Accessibility

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Barrier 3: Accessibility

Vet 16: yes, in parking lot, very small, no handicap spot, or someone parked there for 10 years because never used, no accessibility aisle for lifts, tough to get in the building (step to get in the building)

Vet 64: bathroom access

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



***Looking for Work Barrier 4:
Needing special equipment,
tools, or accommodations on
the job***

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Barrier 4: Needing special equipment, tools, or accommodations on the job

Vet 16: concern about being able to grab or reach certain things in my job description.

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



***Looking for Work Barrier 5:
Concerned about missing
too much work***

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Barrier 5: Concerned about missing too much work

Vet 16: “concern was being there when they wanted me there- can’t be there at 8am because of nursing situation”

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



Looking for work
Barrier 6: Recurring
medical complications

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Barrier 6: Recurring medical complications (notes from the KFNEDES survey for LW3; DIS-SCI1; DIS-SCI2); SSI (V01); (MC – cognitive interview)

KFNEDS004. “Are you kidding? They're [my employer] afraid I'm going to be locked up in the hospital [again] and not be at work tomorrow.”

SSI_V01- “there's time where I'm in pain more than I'm having trouble shivering. And there's times where I'm in shivering more than pain where the shivering is so intense that, you know, you feel like you're gonna die from being cold.”

SSI_V05. “I would be doing different things given if I only had one back. [If they didn't have one of their medical complications]”

SSI_V01. “And it's, you know, stuffy head, cough. Fevers, I get every day. So that's normal.”

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



Employment Strategies: *Looking for work*

<p>LW1. Since your spinal cord injury which of these things have you done to help you prepare or qualify for a job?</p> <p>LW2. Please tell me which of these you are using or have used to look for your current or previous job(s) since your SCI? (n=32)</p>	<p>n (%) of participants</p>
<p><i>“Word of mouth” through friends, family, or other people</i></p>	<p>28 (84.8%)</p>
<p><i>Learn about jobs, careers, or skills on my own</i></p>	<p>23 (69.7%)</p>
<p><i>Obtain medical treatment or rehabilitation</i></p>	<p>23 (69.7%)</p>
<p><i>Manage your SCI-related secondary conditions</i></p>	<p>22 (66.7%)</p>
<p><i>Looking for and applying for jobs online</i></p>	<p>22 (66.7%)</p>

Looking for work
***Strategy 1: “Work of
mouth”***

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Strategy 1: “Word of mouth” through friends, family, or other people

Vet 16: My ex-wife started before me at (name of company) and encouraged me to apply.

**Vet 36: I got both of my jobs through friends.

**Vet 51: This has been the most effective strategy

Vet 54: wife got me a job by telling me our neighbor was hiring

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



Looking for work
Strategy 2: Learn about
jobs, careers, or skills on
my own

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Strategy 2: Learn about jobs, careers, or skills on my own

SSI_V07. "I'd say, uh, the online jobs. You know, PennySaver was the one that-- yeah, and stuff like that."

SSI_V10. "I went down there to fill out an application-- [Home Depot] --while I'm, yes [in it?]. Yeah, so. Um, I called down there periodically."

SSI_V03. "Yeah, I'm always looking, I mean, on my own. I mean, I'm not the one-- before I ask somebody else I'm gonna do it myself... I always do online searches."

SSI_V03. "Everything starts on the internet."

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



Looking for work
Strategy 3: Obtain
medical treatment or
rehabilitation

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Strategy 3: Obtain medical treatment or rehabilitation

Vet 57: in hospital for 6 months, halo on head for 3. I knew how to play (guitar) but needed someone to set up amp. (note he is a musician)

**Vet 69: got neck surgery to help sit

**Vet 71: trying to stay healthy, been using (day 5) of consistently getting up in standing frame. [at home therapy]

Vet 73: Physical Therapy

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



Looking for work
Strategy 4: Manage
your SCI-related
secondary conditions

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Strategy 4: Manage your SCI-related secondary conditions

Vet 52: mobility, strength training, balance, SCI D 5 months.

Vet 62: even going to college have to figure out a schedule

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



***Looking for work
Strategy 5: Looking for
and applying for jobs
online***

Sample Quotes

Looking for Work Strategy 5: Looking for and applying for jobs online

Vet 36: Looked at LinkedIN here and there.

Vet 41: I was turned down for many.

Vet 52: Used internet from home.

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



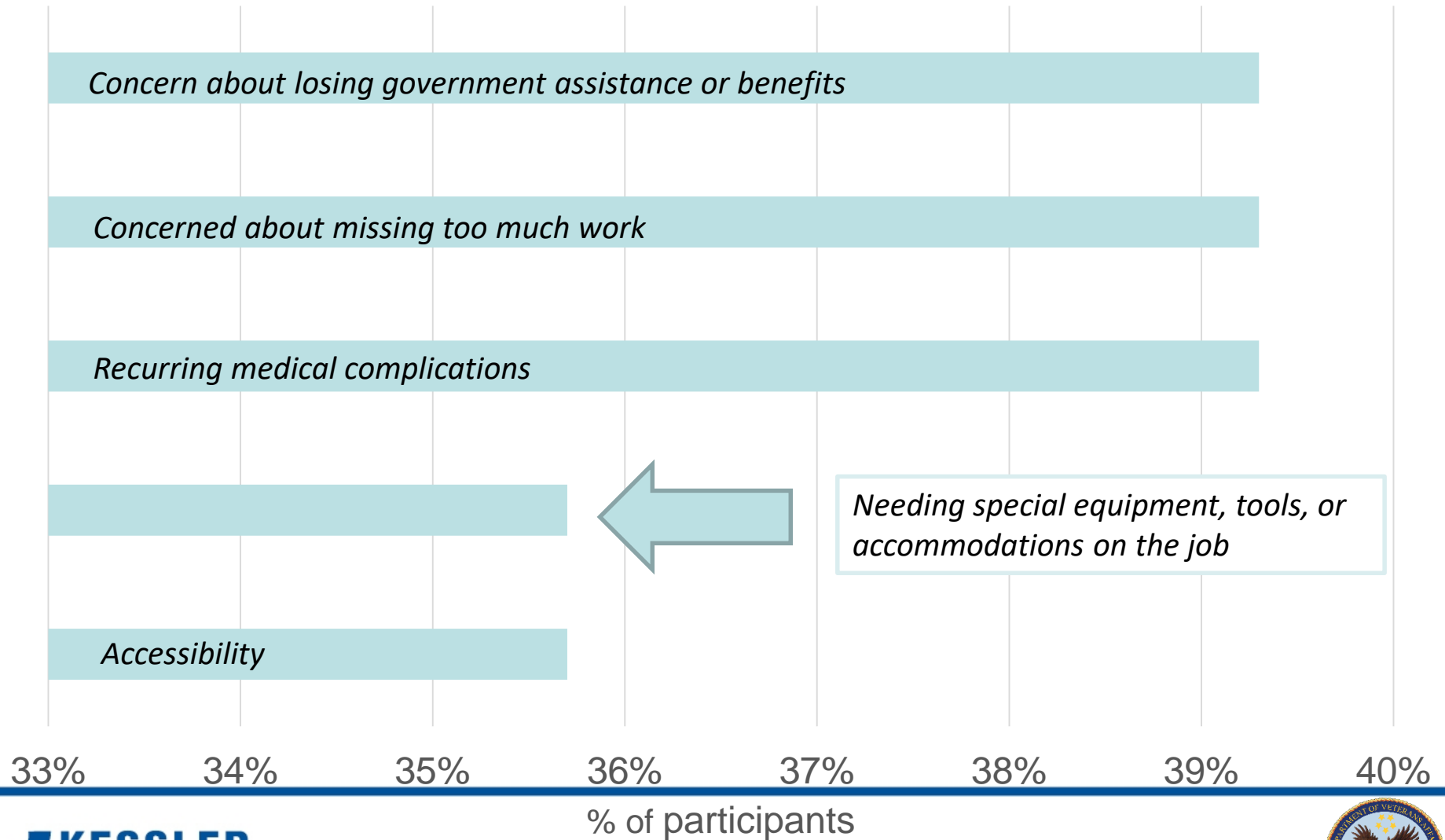
At Work: Employment Barriers

Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interview

KFNEDS Veteran Specific Survey Data

AW1. What problems have you faced while working that are related to your SCI? (n=27)	n (%) of participants
<i>Concern about losing government assistance or benefits</i>	11 (39.3%)
<i>Concerned about missing too much work</i>	11 (39.3%)
<i>Recurring medical complications</i>	11 (39.3%)
<i>Needing special equipment, tools, or accommodations on the job</i>	10 (35.7%)
<i>Accessibility</i>	10 (35.7%)

AW1. What problems have you faced while working that are related to your SCI? (n=27)



***At Work Barrier 1:
Concern about losing
government assistance
or benefits***

Sample Quotes

At Work Barrier 1: Concern about losing government assistance or benefits

Vet 54: that's why I am part time, on SSDI

Vet 55: Did lose it but knew that and wasn't concerned. [note: this speaks to a strategy of informing yourself before accepting job]

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



***At Work Barrier 2:
Concerned about
missing too much work***

Sample Quotes

At Work Barrier 2: Concerned about missing too much work (MC – cognitive interview); SSI - V01

SSI_V01. “And I've had times where, uh, you know, I got urinary tract infections. That's why I said, you know, I can work one day--and then-- and then, next month, not work for a month. You know, it's-- it all depends, you know. There's-- there's no consistency with pain.”

KFNEDS004. “See, but now missing too many days of work works. Because you WOULD have that issue while working.”

KFNEDS008. “It reflects on the check so I would make up time lost by working additional hours. “

SSI_V04. “when I would get to the Bass Pro Shop and, and, and clock in and, and, you know, have a cup of coffee, and uh-oh. Now it's time to go back home and change and get myself cleaned all up and just, you know, just-- you don't wanna be-- h-have that situation.”

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



At Work Barrier 3: Recurring medical complications

Sample Quotes

At Work Barrier 3: Recurring medical complications

**Vet 69: yes, worried about being in same position for 8 or 10 hours a day

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



***At Work Barrier 4:
Needing special
equipment, tools, or
accommodations on the
job***

Sample Quotes

At Work Barrier 4: Needing special equipment, tools, or accommodations on the job

Vet 16: Handicap spots, accessibility in the building, using bathroom.

Vet 64: walker, hearing aids

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



At Work Barrier 5: Accessibility

Sample Quotes

At Work Barrier 5: Accessibility

Vet 50: which entry to go into, doors, curb cut outs, if there is an elevator, place to park with ramp, enough parking to have room.

Vet 52: curb to get access, they immediately built a ramp.

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



At Work: Employment Strategies

***Data Source: CI version of
KFNEDS survey (AW2-1b; 2b; 3b
– What are some of the things
you did to address this
problem?)***

At Work Strategy 1: Attitude/Mindset

At Work Strategy 1: Attitude/Mindset

SSI_V8. “Um, at work, be assertive. I mean, don't let them get away with not following the law.”

SSI_V11. “Um, a good support system and a positive attitude.”

KFNEDS001. “Leaving it alone; telling yourself not to react and keep it rolling works.”

SSI_V12. “Attitude. Attitude. It opens up, um, doors for you.”

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



***At Work Strategy 2:
Supportive Family,
Peers & Coworkers***

Sample Quotes: AW2-3b

SSI_V12. “Um, it was just, uh, talking and getting out-- getting it out of my chest, talking to my wife about it-- having somebody to talk to.”

SSI_V04. ““Hey, go ahead and take the hour to do lunch and go take care of your business and come back and, you know, we'll, we'll, we'll, we'll cover for you.” Very supportive.”

SSI_V9. “But you also have to have a good peer group so that when your-- when your mind-- maybe when your mind isn't in the game or you're just feeling like something's not working out-- you've got to have someone to talk to...”

Cog Inter Vet 40: Spinal Cord issues: there's really nothing you can do but just try to take care of yourself. I was missing work because of it and my employer was understanding about it.

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



At Work Strategy 3: Transportation

At Work Strategy 2: Transportation

KFNEDS004. “Yeah, as far as transportation, getting a car did work best.”

SSI_V08. “Oh, I use the, uh, Paratransit. Yeah, for the most part, they’re on time and everything, so it's no big issue.”

Cog Inter Vet 40: Vehicle: Missed work because of it. I’ve called out or asked for a ride from a friend or requested to work from home. Requested flexibility schedule and location for that day.

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



At Work Strategy 4: Accessibility

Sample Quotes

At Work Strategy 1:

Accessibility:

Vet 65: made sure was accessible before applying

KFNEDS008. “tested the lay of the land for safety.”

Low
Priority



Medium
Priority



High
Priority



Final thoughts

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with looking, securing, or maintaining employment?

Thank you!

Appendix 4

No Cost Extension

July 15, 2020

Mark Wilkison
Grants Management Specialist
US Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity
820 Chandler Street
Fort Detrick, MD 21702

RE: NCE Request (1 Year) for Log No. SC160165 and Contract No. W81XWH-17-1-0696,
“Striving to Work and Overcoming Employment Barriers among Veterans with Spinal Cord
Injury”

Dear Mr. Wilkison,

Dr. John O’Neill is requesting a 1 year NCE on the above-referenced project. The research was delayed because of organizational adjustments brought on by COVID-19. Kessler Foundation offices closed for four months (March-July) with all data collection and analysis conducted remotely. These changes were disruptive causing additional time and effort to continue moving forward. For example, amendments needed to be submitted to IRBs to conduct remote data collection. In addition, two research coordinators, one at each site, transitioned off our research teams just before the pandemic. It took additional effort and time to reorganize our activities and determine who would assume the research coordinators functions. As a consequence of these delays, we are requesting a one year no cost extension.

There will be adequate funding to continue through the requested extension period for both prime and sub sites. Thank you for consideration and await instructions on how to proceed.

Thank you,

Matthew R. Weiner

Matthew R. Weiner
Manager, Sponsored Research Administration
Kessler Foundation
mweiner@kesslerfoundation
973-323-3745