

New rehabilitation programme for spinal cord injured persons in Estonia supporting them to find employment - pilot study

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Introduction and Aims

Haapsalu Neurological Rehabilitation Centre (HNRC) piloted a rehabilitation programme designed for adults with spinal cord injury (SCI) in order to support their everyday life. The piloting was financed through European Social Fund. The aim of the programme was to provide team-based and client-centred approach with a main orientation to support the participants in finding an appropriate job or maintain the current job. In the abstract the experience is introduced.

Material and Methods

There were 20 participants (17 male and 3 female). The average age of the participants was 30.65 years. The independence of the participants was varied (SCIM score 13-100). The first group consisted of participants with high-level SCI, therefore all were wheelchair users and highly dependent on assistance. The second group varied in their characteristics of SCI, but were all walkers, either independent or with an aid. The third and fourth group included more varied participants. All of them used wheelchair for moving. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis was used.

Results

The rehabilitation period lasted three continuous weeks for all the groups (Figure 1). During the rehabilitation period approximately 53.3 ± 5.78 (average ± SD) hours of active therapies were provided, as well as 12.13 ± 2.62 (average ± SD) hours of coun-

selling services and 26.83 ± 17.86 hours of medical services (Figure 3). The participants were approximately active for 4.79 hours per day (Figure 2). The amount of active therapies was the highest for the second group as included the most clients with problems connected to physical aspects of working (e.g. poor balance, quick tiredness etc). The highest amount of counselling services and medical help was needed in the first group. The work-related results were good: 10 participants started to use active means of labour market in order to find appropriate job, 5 participants continued working, and 2 participants started new education (Figure 4). The participants valued the most individually set goals, active rehabilitation days, possibility to be socially active. They also appreciated theoretical information about labour market and entrepreneurship. They thought 3-week rehabilitation was with optimal length but the programme could have included several of those periods.

Conclusion(s)

The programme was successful: the goals were achieved, the discussions were initiated, and the experience for future developments was gained. Homogenous target-group and therefore more concrete base for planning rehabilitation are the main characteristics that support successful approach. More than three hours of activities per day are appreciated by the participants. Good rehabilitation programme is seen to be consisting more than one rehabilitation periods.

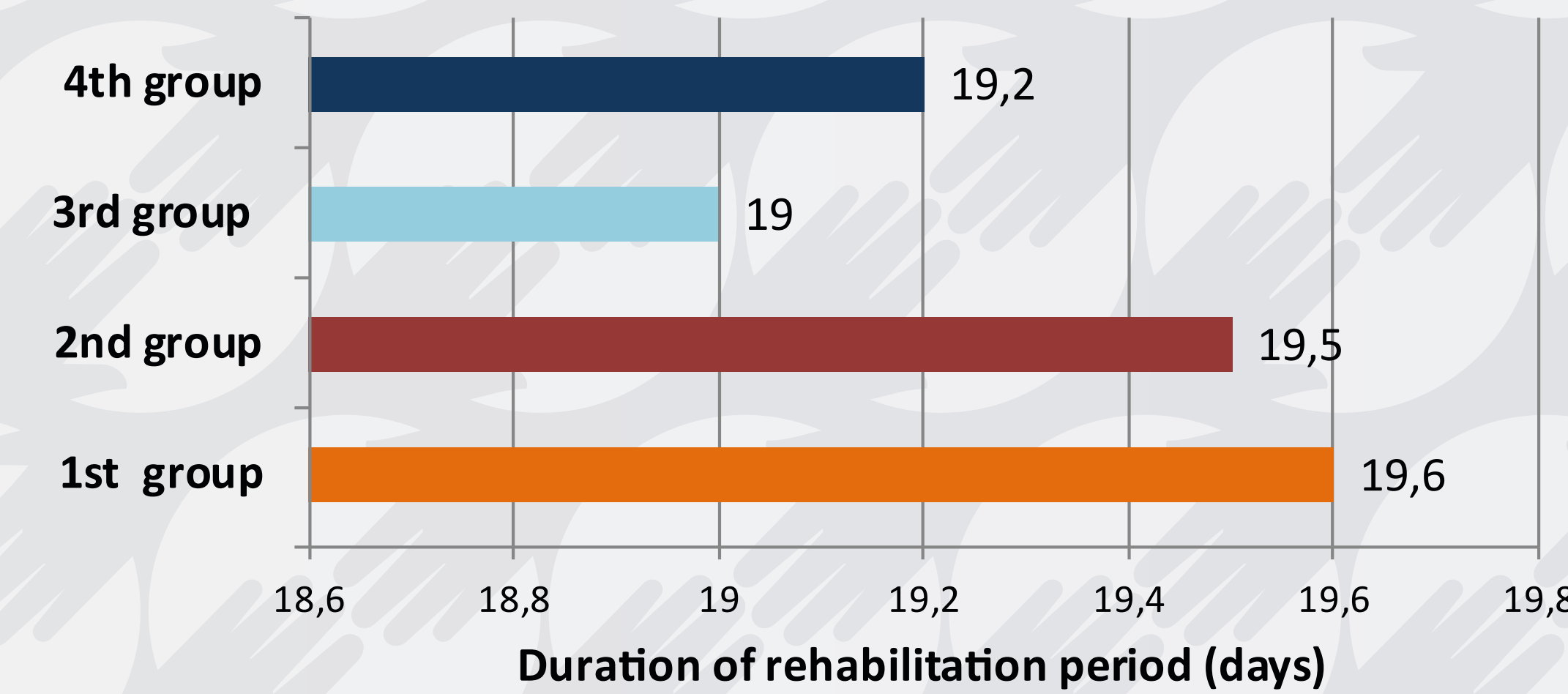


Figure 1. Average duration of rehabilitation periods (days) in different groups

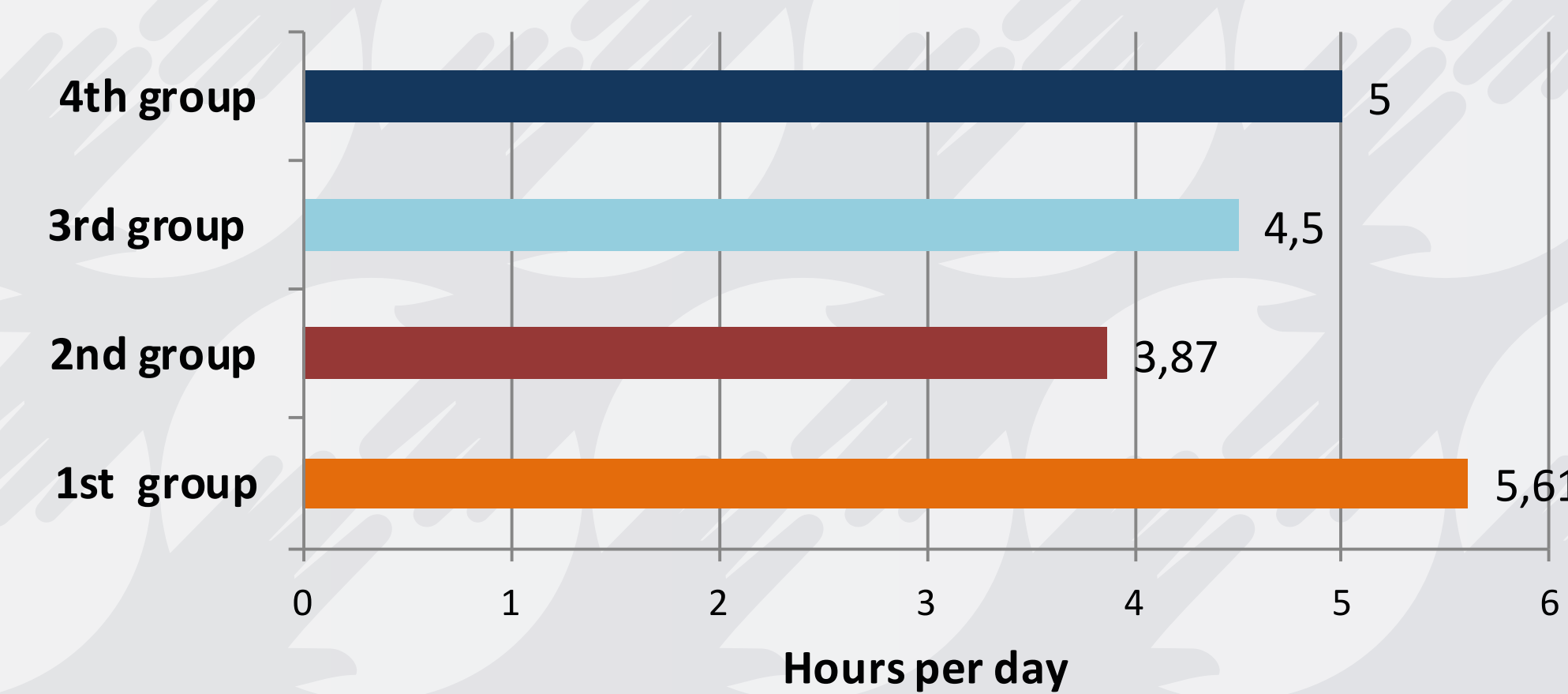


Figure 2. Patients involved to multiple task oriented rehabilitation activities (hours per day) in different groups

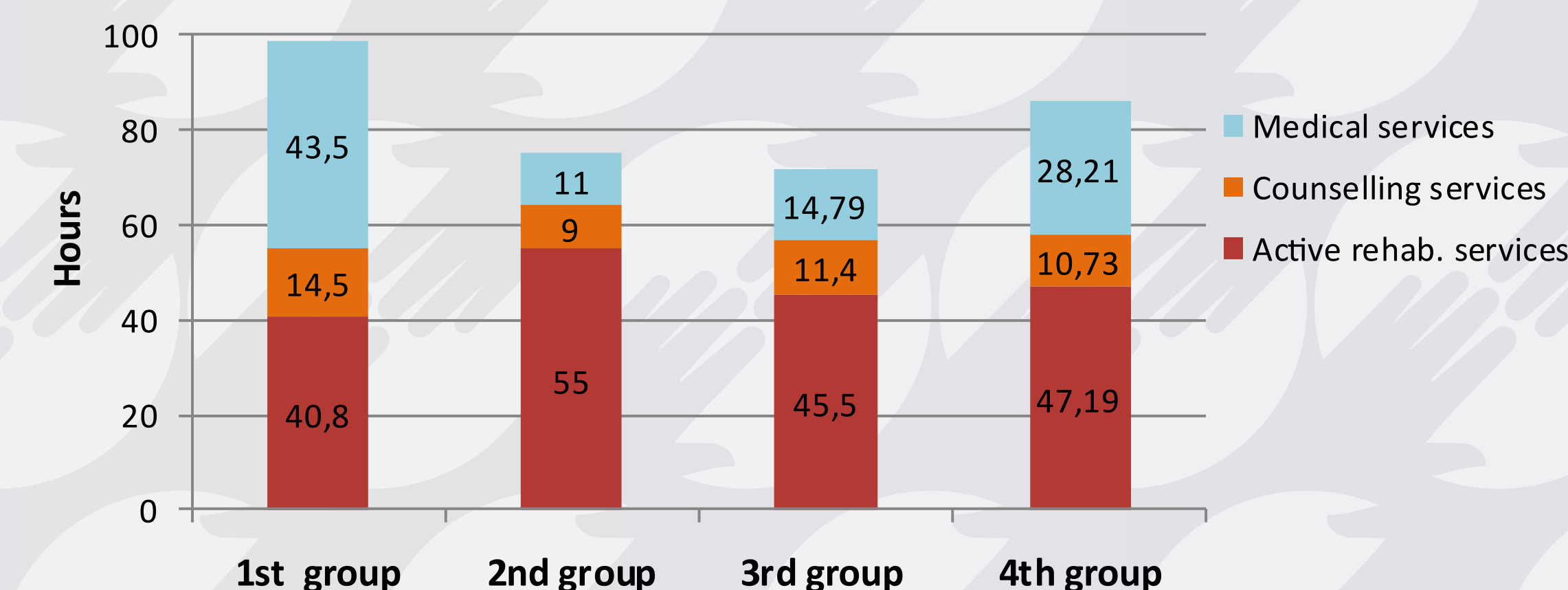


Figure 3. The proportion of different services (hours) throughout the entire rehabilitation program

Table 1. Data of SCI patients participated in the project

	1st group	2nd group	3rd group	4th group
Size of group	5	5	4	6
Age years (mean)	26,2	33,4	29,25	33
Gender (M : F)	5:0	4:1	3:1	5:1
Level of injury	cervical	Mixed group	Mixed group	Mixed group
Type of locomotion	wheelchair	independent	wheelchair	wheelchair
SCIM score	23-51	84-100	48-53	13-76

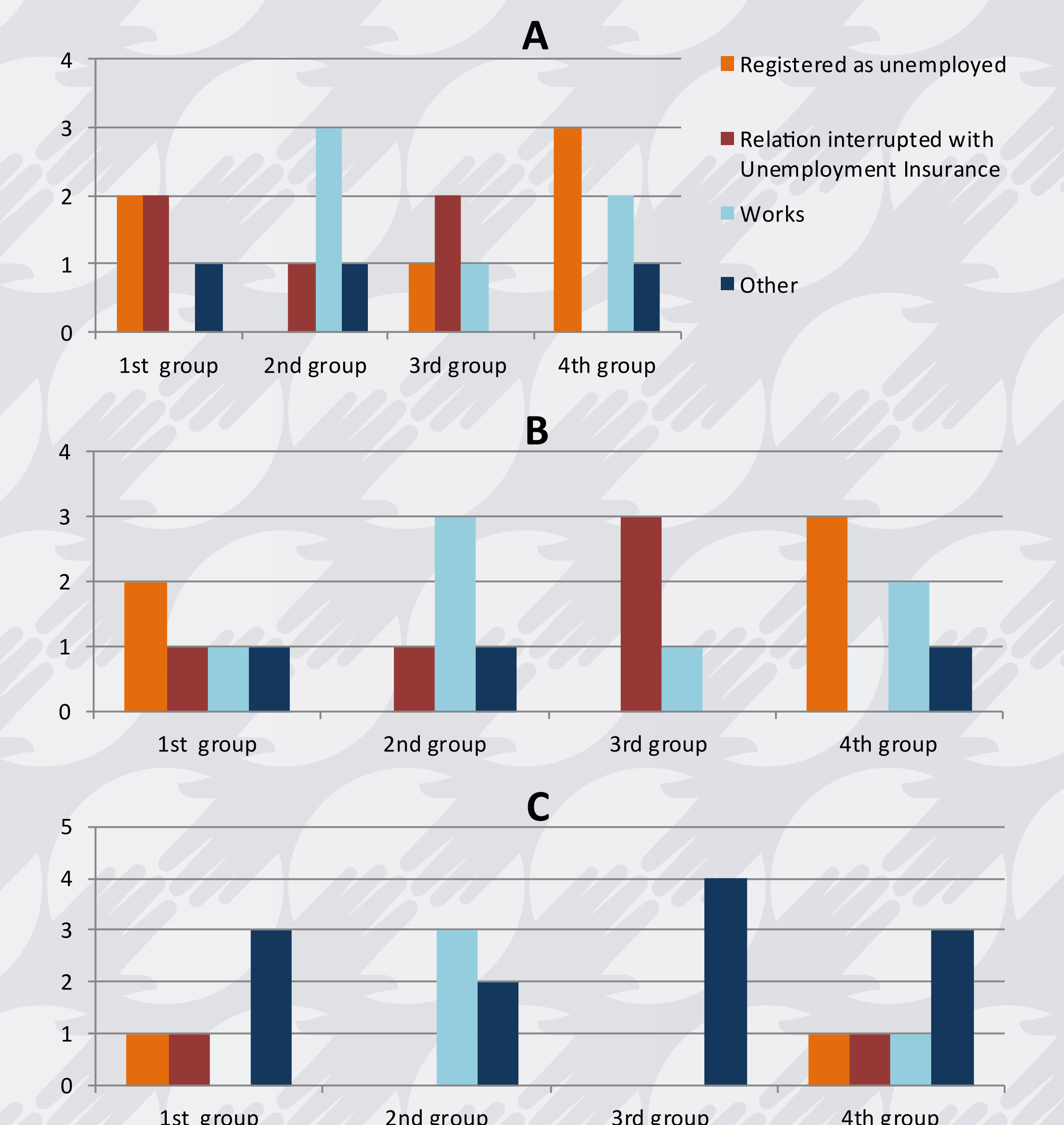


Figure 4. The outcome of rehabilitation programme: A - three months after; B - 6 months after; C - 9 months after



Photo 1. The central aim of interdisciplinary teamwork in rehabilitation program was to support SCI patients to find and/or maintain job.