

# Post-Polio Research Update

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## INTRODUCTION

Prior to the development of vaccines in 1954 and 1960, polio virus infected over 55,000 children per year in the United States; approximately 21,000 of those infections lead to paralysis. 30-40 years following recovery from polio virus infection, many survivors suffer from post-polio syndrome (PPS) – a new weakening in muscles that were previously affected by polio, as well as in muscles that were not originally affected.

There are no studies to the authors' knowledge that explore the combination of polio experience and PPS, major experiences that polio survivors share in terms of life history, and how they managed to deal with certain disruptions in their lives, such as being taken away from school and separation from family.

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## OBJECTIVE

The objective of this mixed-method study is to explore the intersection of quality of life and life course theory as it relates to a sample of polio survivors in the United States by working with the Southeast Michigan Post-Polio Support Group.

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## METHODOLOGY

- Open-Ended Questions & T/F Quality-of-Life Surveys
- 3 Focus Groups & 6 One-on-One Interviews
- Developed a script for questions and used rev.com for transcription following analysis by at least 2 research personnel
- Approved by OU IRB: 1400610-1

4 RESULTS

It is the tiredness that gets you down (n = 18)	
True	12 (66.67%)
Not True	6 (33.33%)
I would much rather do things by myself but I cannot (n = 18)	
True	12 (66.67%)
Not True	6 (33.33%)
I have lost friends as they do not understand my condition (n = 17)	
True	2 (11.76%)
Not True	15 (88.24%)
I worry I am not going to get better (n = 18)	
True	8 (44.44%)
Not True	10 (55.56%)
I do not want to have to ask other people do things for me (n = 16)	
True	11 (68.75%)
Not True	5 (31.25%)

5 RESULTS

## Poliomyelitis Survivors & Common Themes of Their Stories

01

### Stigma

Even long after we had polio and we were, you know, fine, people said 'Oh, kids can't play at your house because that's a polio house.' ... I remember our neighbor had a Slip 'n Slide and he said 'Oh, you can't go on it because you had polio and we might get it.'"



02

### Isolation

"The [hospital] had to have their own spinal tap, [my second one of the day]...so a few more men held me down there. They put me in a room with an iron lung, a small room. There was just a bed and the iron lung and they shut the door because I was crying so much. And I just, I mean, I remember that horror."



03

### Acceptance

"I never learned to ask for help. It's what I have done for myself. I changed that stinkin' thinkin' that I had that I didn't need anybody and I do need people"



04

### Positivity

"Thinking back, my life would not be as rich and full as it is today if I had not had polio"



05

### Social support

"He [my husband] keeps encouraging me and telling me that 'hey, you're doin' good.'" So I just um, I say to myself I know I'm doing good."



06

### Determination

"We attended regular school. It was initially recommended that we attend handicapped school. [Mom] said there was nothing wrong with our minds, so off to regular school we went. We did just fine."



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## CONCLUSION

**Quantitative:** The significance of having kids with worrying less about health conditions deteriorating or health not getting better shows that support systems plays a big role in health outcomes on patients living with chronic conditions. The sample questions show that survivors want to be independent.

**Qualitative:** Major themes highlighted on the left shows that chronic illness has major implications on life and physicians need to be aware of them when treating patients.