

of topics relevant to the SCI community, such as maintaining good nutrition, bladder management, assistive technology, fertility after SCI, recreational activities and recovery research. Forum presentations are summarized into written reports, and selected forums are digitally recorded for viewing as streaming video on our Web site. For more information about SCI Forums, visit our Web site at <http://sci.washington.edu/info/forums> or contact Cynthia Salzman at 206-685-3999 or csalzman@u.washington.edu.

SCI Update Newsletter

The newsletter of the NWRSCIS, *SCI Update*, is published three times a year both in print and on our Web site. This publication includes articles on SCI-related topics, research news, profiles and reviews of the medical literature. Read online at <http://sci.washington.edu/info/newsletters>. To subscribe, please contact Cynthia Salzman at 206-685-3999 or csalzman@u.washington.edu.

SCI Patient Education Brochures

Staying Healthy after a Spinal Cord Injury is a series of 10 brochures providing self-care information about skin care, bladder and bowel management, pain and depression after SCI. These brochures can be downloaded from our Web site at <http://sci.washington.edu/info/pamphlets>.

Peer Mentoring

After a traumatic event such as SCI, it often helps to talk to someone who has been through a similar experience (a “peer”) and has made a successful adjustment to SCI. This program matches newly injured SCI inpatients with peer mentors based on gender, age, injury level, function and life circumstances. This is facilitated through our psychology and recreational therapy staff. For more information, please call Chris Garbaccio, Peer Mentor Coordinator, at 206-616-8568.

Consumer Advisory Board

An advisory board of individuals with SCI, family members and health care professionals meets regularly throughout the year to provide guidance and feedback about our programs and research efforts.

Project Staff

- Charles Bombardier, PhD, Project Director
- Stephen Burns, MD, Medical Co-Director
- Jeanne Hoffman, PhD, Psychosocial Co-Director
- Virginia Sanchez, MOT, Research Coordinator
- Cynthia Salzman, MHA, Public Information Specialist
- Chris Garbaccio, BA, Research Care Manager, Peer Mentor Coordinator
- Linda Becker, BS, Research Assistant
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Contact

- 206-616-2183 or 800-366-5643 (toll free)
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Spinal Cord Injury Clinics:

University of Washington Medical Center

- Rina Reyes, MD, Attending Physician
- Rehabilitation Clinic nurses, 206-598-4295.

Harborview Medical Center

- Barry Goldstein, MD, PhD, Attending Physician
- Rehabilitation Clinic nurses, 206-744-5862.

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Spinal Cord Injury Model System

NORTHWEST REGIONAL SPINAL CORD INJURY SYSTEM

UW Medicine

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The Northwest Regional Spinal Cord Injury System (NWRSCIS), centered within the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Washington Medical Center, Harborview Medical Center and Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center, is one of only 14 model spinal cord injury (SCI) centers in the country funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). **Our mission is to improve the lives of people with SCI through excellent patient care, research and education.** Consequently, the NWRSCIS strives to provide specialized care to persons with SCI, to conduct clinically relevant research and to disseminate the most useful, evidence-based information to people with SCI, their families and professionals.

Patient Care

Beginning with pre-hospital care that includes Medic One and Airlift Northwest, lifesaving emergency medical services are delivered to injured persons throughout Washington, Alaska, Montana and Idaho. Once people are transported to Harborview, the region's only Level 1 trauma center, experts in neurological surgery, orthopedic surgery, general surgery, neurology/emergency medicine, pulmonary medicine, plastic surgery and rehabilitation medicine combine in multidisciplinary teams to provide care tailored to the specific type of injury and the individual needs of the patient.

Our inpatient rehabilitation program at University of Washington Medical Center and Harborview Medical Center is recognized by the Committee on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and is rated the #1 hospital-based rehabilitation program in the nation by *US News and World Report*. Our outpatient rehabilitation clinics provide the full complement of rehabilitation therapies and nursing care as well as continued medical services for SCI related conditions. We have a comprehensive

team of rehabilitation staff, including rehabilitation physicians, nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, recreation therapists, social workers, vocational/educational rehabilitation counselors, psychologists and neuropsychologists.

In addition, our centers provide specialized services in the areas of assistive technology, adaptive driving, wheelchair seating, pain management, fertility, bladder management, spasticity management, functional electrical stimulation (FES) and body-weight supported therapy.

Research

Each model system is mandated to engage in three types of research activities: contributing data to the National SCI Model System database, conducting a site-specific study, and participating in a multi-site module study.

National SCI Model System Database. Newly injured patients with SCI are invited to participate in a longitudinal national database of persons with SCI. This information is used to further understanding of the long-term consequences of SCI and to develop improved treatments and systems of care. To protect privacy, identifying information is not provided to the national database. Since 1973, more than 24,000 people have provided information for the database. It is used by researchers throughout the country to improve care for persons with SCI.

Site-specific study: SCI-Link (Linking people with SCI to health resources). Many people with SCI tell us that the first year after discharge from rehabilitation is very difficult because they have so many questions and new problems to solve but do not always know where to find the information they need. To address this, we designed a study to determine whether providing regularly scheduled telephone follow-up calls to people with SCI after discharge can help them get the care they need, solve problems that arise, and avoid the medical

complications that people often experience during their first year after SCI.

Multi-site module study: Adapt. There are many myths about adaptation to SCI, such as the belief that everyone must go through a grief process or everyone gets depressed. We hope to improve how we assist people with SCI by gathering information on what people experience after SCI, what treatments they receive and how they view their own health physically and emotionally over time. This study follows people from inpatient rehabilitation to one year after injury.

The effects of venlafaxine XR (Effexor XR) after SCI. One out of five people with SCI report problems with sleep, poor energy, low mood, loss of interest and appetite changes. These symptoms may result in part from stress-related changes in brain chemistry. Antidepressant medications such as venlafaxine XR (Effexor XR) are designed to rebalance brain chemistry and improve these basic biological functions. Despite widespread use of antidepressants, they have never been proven to be effective in people with SCI. We will study the effect of venlafaxine XR on these symptoms and on pain in people who are at least one year post-SCI. Participants will be randomized to receive a 12-week course of either venlafaxine XR or a placebo. Those who receive placebo and remain symptomatic at the end of the trial will be offered free treatment with venlafaxine XR. For more information about the study, contact Christian Buhagiar, MS, research coordinator, at 206-897-4731.

Education

SCI Forum

The SCI Forum is a monthly evening educational program for persons with SCI and their friends, family members and caregivers, held at the UW or Harborview Medical Center. The forums provide current information and research on a variety