

## Summary

# Centralisation of the treatment, rehabilitation and life-long care of persons with spinal cord injury

## Why centralisation?

While the incidence of spinal cord injury (SCI) is relatively low, the physical, medical, psychological, social and financial consequences of such injuries are highly complex and, potentially, devastating for the injured person and his/her family. Thus, we find ourselves faced with a classic health sector dilemma; a small group of people with a diagnosis that demands the highly-specialised knowledge and experience of a wide range of medical, clinical and counselling personnel over a long period of time.

If reintegration of individuals who sustain a SCI into the community is to be achieved, it must be part of a coordinated approach that is managed early on in the individual's rehabilitation. A seamless approach is required that addresses the medical, the vocational, the social and the community effects of SCI. It is not enough to just train people to dress and manage their bowel, bladder, skin care and transfer from the chair. We have to give people a reason for applying these skills.

Such a holistic, coordinated approach to the treatment, rehabilitation and life-long care of persons with SCI can best be achieved in a centralised system.

## What is centralisation?

Centralisation of rehabilitation services for those who sustain a SCI is more than just a question of location. The services and resources available also dictate the quality of the service. The quality of the service provided rather than distance to home is of paramount importance.

The treatment and rehabilitation of people with SCI is centralised when the care is concentrated in Spinal Cord Injury Centres (SCIC) treating

- traumatic and non-traumatic spinal cord lesions
- a minimum of 40 – 50 newly-injured persons per year

## What is a Spinal Cord Injury Centre (SCIC)?

An SCIC is a dedicated centre of excellence in the treatment, rehabilitation and life-long care of persons with SCI and of research in this field. An SCIC is located at a university hospital and

- employs permanent multidisciplinary teams, headed by SCI consultants and consisting of nursing staff, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, recreational therapists, psychologists, social workers and counsellors. All members of staff must have expertise in SCI
- has direct access to the other medical and clinical specialisations upon which this patient group relies. These include neurosurgery, neurology, orthopaedic surgery, radiology, rehabilitation medicine, anaesthesiology, urology, gastroenterology, plastic surgery, gynaecology and obstetrics, fertility, sexology, respiration, gerontology, paediatrics, hand surgery, dentistry and dietetics

- gathers and submits information to a regional/national/international SCI registry
- provides peer support that is organised by the peer counsellor(s) who are employed by the centre or by the SCI organisation
- provides proactive support for families
- cooperates closely with the SCI organisation
- provides expert counselling to other health care professionals, persons with SCI and their families
- performs research in many different aspects of SCI and participates in international research collaborations
- educates and trains community-based health care personnel and future health care professionals

### **Stages of care provided by the SCIC**

An SCIC provides individualised rehabilitation in accordance with personal rehabilitation plans that focus on the motivation, integrity and dignity of the person with SCI and which are devised in consultation with him/her. The length of stay at the centre is based on the expected outcome that is defined in the individual rehabilitation plan. It is recommended that rehabilitation commences as soon as possible.

The stages of care provided by a SCIC is

- acute and emergency stage
- primary rehabilitation
- continuing care services
  - reintegration in the community resource
  - life-long follow-up consultations
  - rehabilitation periods
  - readmissions for treatment according to needs

### **Necessary facilities at the SCIC**

#### Room and ward profile

- Single rooms en-suite
- Twin-bedded rooms en-suite (shared, for example, with carers/personal assistants)
- Isolation rooms en-suite
- Meeting rooms/consultation rooms
- Day room
- Kitchen facilities
- Dining area

#### On site

- Training apartments

- Family accommodation
- Fitness room and sports hall
- Swimming pool
- Outdoor recreational and training facilities
- Seating and posture clinic
- Vocational training facilities
- Dental facilities
- Restaurant (staff, patient, visitor)
- Internet café
- Library
- Shop
- Helicopter pad
- Offices and facilities for personnel and therapists

#### Access

- Patients' mini bus
- Specialised driving tuition

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## **ESCIF 2010**