



FACILITATING SCI RESEARCHER GROUPS TO DEVELOP RESEARCH IDEAS: AN INITIATIVE OF THE SPINAL CORD RESEARCH HUB

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1. BACKGROUND

The Spinal Cord Research Hub (SCoRH) has been a target destination for spinal cord injury (SCI) researchers since 2018. This unique online platform allows researchers and clinicians in SCI to make connections with colleagues working in similar research interest areas, to form groups, share resources and work together to build multi-centre studies to fast track SCI research across the globe.

Collaboration is essential in the SCI research space due to the low volume of trial participants in any one location. Combining expertise and resources can maximize outputs and maximize impact. Expanding networks can attract greater funding opportunities and optimize opportunities for growth in research¹.

SCoRH offers a Research Group Facilitation (RGF) service providing active groups with opportunities to meet with a senior researcher to outline direction, look at challenges faced and support their next steps.

2. METHOD

Eighteen (18) collaborative SCI research groups have formed on SCoRH. Groups can be created as open (public) or closed (private) and often comprise researchers from multiple countries.

The Spinal Research Institute (SRI) offered an initial sub-set of groups that have formed on SCoRH:

1. An online session to discuss goals, objectives, progression of ideas and any hurdles in the process.
2. Follow up summary email of meeting minutes and next steps.
3. Coordination of optional further meetings.

3. RESULTS

A three-fold increase in SCoRH group activity has been noted since the RGF service commenced by way of increased discussion posts and greater upload of documents and resources within groups on SCoRH.

A survey of the initial group members using the RGF service reported:

- The session supported their group to define objectives, drive the direction of their group and led to follow up group meetings.

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Sponsors

The SRI's Spinal Cord Research Hub (SCoRH) was developed with the support of the Ian Potter Foundation and the IOOF Foundation.

References

1 <https://www.springernature.com/gp/researchers/the-source/blog/blogposts-life-in-research/benefits-of-research-collaboration/17360752>

Most of the groups reported:

- Lack of time or other priorities was the main challenge they had faced with their group collaboration prior to the RGF session.
- Their group has now progressed actions and outputs since the RGF session.
- They had nominated leads for their group projects, defined short and long-term actions and started their first group task.
- That the RGF sessions were very important to their group's progress.

Comments from SCoRH group members:

"I have thoroughly enjoyed our sessions, having the SRI encourage us to ensure we meet our objectives really has been the key to getting this group active."

"The session was an opportunity to bring much wider group of people together and validate the value and importance of their work. It also highlighted the importance of collaboration and has led to new projects, ideas and joint learning. Thank you."

"It provided great ideas of where to focus our energies."

The RGF sessions:

- Encourage clear group outline and objectives to be set or revised
- Encourage good planning and efficient time to outcomes.
- Support effective use of time and clear timelines.
- Keep members of a group involved and identifies leads for each part of the project.
- Offer senior researcher input into their group focus and objectives.



4. CONCLUSION

The RGF Service will continue to be offered by the SRI to all groups on SCoRH. Periodic surveys will be conducted to build on the offerings to SCI research groups.

If your SCoRH group is interested in this RGF service that the SRI provides, then please contact Emma Peleg at: emma.peleg@thesri.org