



## **Edition 2 for 2025!**

Plexus is the quarterly newsletter of the Spinal Research Institute (SRI). Read on for news updates on SRI's philanthropic program, staff news, program updates, and news for consumers and researchers.

### **SCoRH, the Spinal Cord Research Hub launch - thank you Freemasons Foundation Victoria!**

The SRI recently held a demonstration and morning tea at the Austin Hospital to celebrate the official launch of SCoRH, the Spinal Cord Research Hub. SCoRH has been completely redesigned to improve its functionality and allow for a vastly improved user experience.

Professor James Best AO, Director of Research at Austin Health, acknowledged the significance of SCoRH to advance collaborative research in the complex field of spinal cord injury.

"The Spinal Research Institute is a key member of the Austin Mercy Precinct Research Collaborative. Through the generosity of its supporters, Lady Southey AC, Patron, and cornerstone donors of this project Freemasons Foundation Victoria, the Institute has been able to build an engine room, amplifying its expertise in Victoria to have national and international

significance. The Spinal Cord Research Hub (SCoRH) is a first in spinal cord injury research for Australia, and in fact, for the world. The Hub has created an ecosystem linking researchers with each other and bringing together multidisciplinary research teams working in the field of spinal cord injury.



The advanced version of the Hub incorporates new technology that will facilitate engagement between researchers, clinicians, and consumers around the world. It's a tribute to the vision of the Spinal Research Institute leaders who have been able to look beyond our own backyard and see the potential for a global approach, and the opportunity to lead it. The breadth and depth of research partnerships and services now available on the Hub offer multiple opportunities to harness the power of research to improve health outcomes for the spinal cord injury community."

**Professor James Best AO, Director of Research at Austin Health**

This event also celebrated the multi-year support of Freemasons Foundation Victoria whose generosity has helped to transform SCoRH into an ecosystem that links local and international stakeholders in spinal cord injury to advance research in this field.



Above: Freemasons Foundation Victoria Directors and members of our local SCI research community.



Above L-R: Charlie Heerey (SRI Director), Deirdre Mori (SRI Development Manager), Rodney Lavin JP (FFV Immediate Past Chair), Garry James (FFV Chairman), David Gibbs AM (FFV Past Director), Kristine Hendry (SRI Chief Executive Officer), Philip Mayers AM (FFV Director), Frank Nigro (SRI Director)

## SCI Research Collaboration Grants - record number of applications

Applications for the 2025 SCI Research Collaboration Grants have now closed. These grants support recipients to attend the International Spinal Cord Society's Annual Scientific Meeting, where they can meet other researchers, present their work to an international audience, and grow their collaborative networks.

This is the 10th year the SRI has offered these grants and a record number of submissions this year highlights the need for this kind of funding. As a result, we've also expanded our review panel, which now includes:

- Dr Colleen O'Connell, Stan Cassidy Centre for Rehabilitation
- Dr Andrei Krassioukov, University of British Columbia

- Campbell Message, Paralympics Australia
- Larnie Ball, Spinal Research Institute
- Dr Glenn Cartwright, Spinal Research Institute
- Dr Mario D'Cruz, Spinal Research Institute
- Kristine Hendry, Spinal Research Institute
- Antonio Vecchio, Spinal Research Institute

It's exciting to see a diverse range of research areas represented in the applications - a tough job is ahead for our review panel and we thank them for their time in assisting us with this process.

We look forward to introducing you to the successful grant recipients for 2025 in the August edition of Plexus.

The SCI Research Collaboration Grants are generously supported by the SRI's [Patron's Program](#).

Below are some quotes from previous grant recipients used in promotion of the 2025 grant round. They illustrate the impact of the grants and the importance of the opportunities recipients have gained as a result of attending the conference.

Attending the conference was a pivotal moment in my academic journey, and I am excited about the possibilities that have opened up as a result.

**Jacob, Australia**




**2025** Applications now open!

SCI Research Collaboration Grants  
[thesri.org/collaboration-grants](https://thesri.org/collaboration-grants)

There was a wide range of research topics presented at the conference, which was particularly useful in broadening my understanding of the importance of issues outside of my research area facing people with a spinal cord injury.

**Matthew, UK**




**2025** Applications now open!

SCI Research Collaboration Grants  
[thesri.org/collaboration-grants](https://thesri.org/collaboration-grants)

I have already begun sharing insights gained at the conference with my supervisors and teammates in India, confident that they will enhance our approach to SCI treatment and improve health outcomes in our country.

**Kanishka, India**




**2025** Applications now open!

SCI Research Collaboration Grants  
[thesri.org/collaboration-grants](https://thesri.org/collaboration-grants)

Attending ISCoS was a transformative experience for me. I had the opportunity to meet researchers whose work I read and was inspired by for years.

**Merna, Canada**




**2025** Applications now open!

SCI Research Collaboration Grants  
[thesri.org/collaboration-grants](https://thesri.org/collaboration-grants)



## Get involved: Your voice matters in spinal cord injury research

Want to get involved in research but not sure how?

The SRI is calling on people with lived experience of SCI to join its Consumer Engagement Program.

This initiative places lived experience at the heart of research by supporting individuals to co-design and co-deliver projects with researchers.

Whether you're curious about research and the research process, interested in joining research studies or clinical trials, or want to share your lived experience with researchers to improve research outcomes, your voice matters.



Find out how you can get involved and make a real impact on spinal cord injury research. [Join the Consumer Engagement Program!](#)

## Changes to the SRI Team

### Thank you and farewell

**Emma Peleg, International Research Collaborations Manager**

After 8.5 years we say thank you and farewell to Emma Peleg, International Research Collaborations Manager. Emma has created exceptional programs to support the SCI research community - starting with Collaboration Grants (now numbering 105 grants), the launch of SCoRH, the Spinal Cord Research Hub (with a research community now spanning over 40 countries), and the Mentor Program (with a cohort of 7 early career researchers). Not to mention numerous networking events, collaboration



workshops, conference posters and presentations over the years. With her collaborative approach, Emma built an international network of researchers and clinicians who engage with and participate in the SRI's Research Collaborations Programs. Each of these programs is now poised to evolve and take a further impactful step, thanks to Emma's significant work. We wish Emma well on her future path.

## Welcome

### **Larnie Ball, International Research Collaborations Manager**

We welcome Larnie Ball to the role of International Research Collaborations Manager. Larnie brings over 30 years of experience in the disability and spinal sectors, both in Australia and internationally, with a strong and ongoing interest in peer-led supports. She appreciates the value of lived experience in service design and delivery, ensuring that those with spinal cord injuries have a voice in shaping the services that support them. Larnie has successfully managed research projects and translated findings into community-driven solutions that enhance the quality of life for individuals with spinal cord injuries. Her expertise spans complex grant-funded initiatives, compliance, and innovative program development. With a passion for building meaningful relationships with stakeholders, she is committed to advancing spinal cord injury research and supporting the Spinal Research Institute's mission to improve health outcomes globally.



### **Dr Glenn Cartwright, Research Program Officer**

We welcome Dr Glenn Cartwright to the role of Research Program Officer. Glenn has over 30 years' post-doctoral and management experience, particularly in translational cancer research spanning basic discovery to early-phase clinical studies. Holding senior management roles within the university, research institute and government sectors, he is experienced in developing and end-to-end management of grants, fellowships and funding agreements as well as developing strategy aimed at advancing health outcomes. Glenn is passionate about building workforce capacity and capability and keen to use his skills and knowledge to expand and develop the spinal research sector.



# Are you seeking participants for your research study or clinical trial?

The SRI regularly receives requests to promote research to potential participants for research projects. We now have an [online form](#) where these requests can be submitted for consideration.

## Studies and trials currently seeking participants

### Pinch Power study

**Recruiting participants with SCI who live in or near Sydney.**

Researchers\* from NeuRA's Spinal Cord Injury Research Centre are investigating whether a single session of transcutaneous spinal stimulation combined with exercises can improve neural and muscle activity in people with and without cervical spinal cord injury.

**What:** 30 minutes of non-invasive neurostimulation combined with exercises and electrical stimulation

**Who:** People with chronic cervical spinal cord injury who can minimally to moderately move one index finger.

**How:** 2 x 3-hour sessions with compensation of \$25/h.

**Why:** To help understand the effect of surface spinal stimulation on voluntary muscle activity during and immediately after stimulation.

**Where:** Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA), Spinal Cord Injury Research Center (SCIRC), Randwick, Sydney.

**More information:** [please click here.](#)

**Express your interest** [by completing this quick form.](#)

\*The research team includes an Advisory Group of members with lived experience of SCI.

**Contact:** Janie Provencher at [j.provencher@neura.edu.au](mailto:j.provencher@neura.edu.au) or phone (02)9399-1033.



## **The REACH-SCI study: Reduction of sedEntary Activities to improve Cardiovascular Health in individuals with Spinal Cord Injury**

### **Recruiting participants with SCI who live in or near London.**

Researchers at the Brunel University of London seek people with paraplegia to test REACH-SCI, an 8-week activity tracking programme that aims to improve heart health.

The programme involves using a smartwatch with wheelchair mode to track activity and using exercise bands and a portable hand cycle.

Researchers hope the findings of this study lead to improvements in healthcare for individuals with paraplegia in the future. It was co-designed with individuals with paraplegia, with additional input from their family members and healthcare professionals.

#### **Eligibility:**

- spinal cord injury at T1 or below (paraplegia)
- 18+ years of age
- use a manual wheelchair to get around during the day
- able to travel to Brunel University of London, Uxbridge

**[Please click here to complete the expression of interest form.](#)**





# ARE YOU A MANUAL WHEELCHAIR USER WITH A SPINAL CORD INJURY WANTING TO GET MORE ACTIVE?

Join our study to test a new physical  
activity programme to improve heart  
health in people with paraplegia

## What will it involve?

- An 8-week programme to increase your activity throughout the day
- Using a Smartwatch with wheelchair mode to track activity
- Using exercise bands and a portable hand cycle
- Measurements of health, like body fat and blood sugar

## Am I eligible?

- 18 + years old with paraplegia
- Use a manual wheelchair
- Able to travel to Brunel University of London



**£50**

**SHOPPING VOUCHER**  
& travel expenses covered

Approved by Brunel's College of Health, Medicine &  
Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee and NHS  
Research Ethics Committee (27/3/2025 to 31/12/2025)  
Version 2.5 (16/01/2025)

If you're interested and want to  
learn more, scan the QR code or  
email: [daniel.cooper2@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:daniel.cooper2@brunel.ac.uk)

**Sleep disturbances following spinal cord injury: Understanding help-seeking behaviour and co-designing a sleep management resource**

### Recruiting clinicians in Australia.

Following a spinal cord injury, people will often experience challenges with their sleep and seeking help for their sleep disturbances. We are currently recruiting clinicians who work with people with SCI who experience sleep disturbances, for

the purpose of co-designing a sleep management resource for people with SCI who have issues with sleep.

This project will lead to a novel sleep management resource for people with SCI who experience sleep disturbances. This resource will be developed through needs identification interviews (completed), and co-design workshops with people with SCI and also clinicians (recruiting).

The research team is recruiting clinicians who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Have experience/expertise working with people with SCI
- Have expertise in sleep (does not need to be SCI specific)
- Clinicians who have experience/expertise in SCI and sleep

For more information, please email Dr Emily Bray: [emily.bray@griffith.edu.au](mailto:emily.bray@griffith.edu.au)



**SLEEP AFTER SPINAL CORD INJURY**

Are you interested in improving the support offered to help people with their sleep after spinal cord injury?

We want to hear from clinicians who work with people with spinal cord injuries or who have expertise in sleep

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

[emily.bray@griffith.edu.au](mailto:emily.bray@griffith.edu.au)

HREC/2024/QHFSS&PQ/110378  
GU/2024/619

**Accessing and Understanding Health Information Following a Spinal Cord Injury or Disorder**

**Recruiting participants with SCI who live in Australia.**

This project examines the health literacy skills, or the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health decisions, of people living with a chronic neurological condition: spinal cord injury or disorder (SCI/D). We will survey adults living in the community with a SCI/D so that we can better understand their health information needs, as well as the important role that family, peers, and healthcare providers play in supporting health literacy.

Participation involves completing an online survey (~20 minutes) with questions about

- your background,
- how you access and use health information,
- your confidence in your ability to manage health issues, and
- your health needs and quality of life.

**[Please click here to complete the survey.](#)**

For more information, please email Georgina Edwards:

[georgina.edwards@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:georgina.edwards@adelaide.edu.au)

# Do you have a Spinal Cord Injury or Disorder?

We are interested in how you access and use health information to make informed decisions about your healthcare.

**Participation involves completing an online survey (~20 minutes) with questions about:**

- Your background
- How you access and use health information
- Your confidence in your ability to manage health issues
- Your health needs and quality of life

**You can participate if you:**

- Are 18 years or older and;
- Have a spinal cord injury or disorder and;
- Are fluent in English and;
- Live in Australia



**For more information and to participate, scan the QR code, or see:**

**[https://adelaideuniwide.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_42ueZbDopCvoOgu](https://adelaideuniwide.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_42ueZbDopCvoOgu)**

You can also contact the research team at:  
[georgina.edwards@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:georgina.edwards@adelaide.edu.au)

This project has received ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (H-2025-059)



**Rebuilding meaningful productive role participation after SCI:**

**Understanding the perspectives of people living with SCI in Australia**

**Recruiting participants with SCI who live in Australia.**

This study aims to inform people with SCI on how rebuilding engagement in productive life roles such as work, education, volunteering, leisure, home and family management and parental roles can enhance quality of life and social



participation. Understanding the barriers and enablers to productive role participation will inform policy and future practice guidelines for health practitioners and community organisations working with individuals and their families with a SCI. This study will provide insights into the lived experiences of individuals with spinal cord injury in Australia.

## Lived Expert Panel

- At least 18 years of age
- Living with an acquired SCI or a carer/family member/significant other of a person living with SCI
- Living in the community and 5 years post SCI event
- Able to review and discuss written documents in English

## Interview Participant

- Adults aged 18 years and over
- Living with a SCI acquired at least 12 months ago [traumatic or non-traumatic]
- Living in the community
- Willing to share their experiences about rebuilding productive life roles
- Able to share their experiences in conversational English

For more information, please contact Shawna Power:

[22118557@student.westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:22118557@student.westernsydney.edu.au)

### Interview Participant

Are you living with spinal cord injury and willing to share your experiences of rebuilding life post injury? Adults at least 18 years of age who are living with SCI and one year or more post injury are invited to participate in a new study that aims to identify the enablers, barriers, supports and services to rebuild lives post SCI. Your participation in this study would involve a 60-to-90-minute interview online, by phone or in person. Compensation of \$50 is provided for your time. This study has ethical approval from Western Sydney University H16372 and is being funded by Spinal Cord Injuries Australia.

For more information or to express your interest, please email Shawna the PhD student - [22118557@student.westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:22118557@student.westernsydney.edu.au)

### Rebuilding Productive Life Roles after Spinal Cord Injury

#### Invitation to participate in a research interview and share your experiences

If you are 18 years or older living with a spinal cord injury for one year or more, you may be eligible to participate in a research study that aims to understand how people rebuild their productive life roles after injury- such as returning to work, study, family, community roles and engaging in leisure.



#### Are you eligible?

- Adults aged 18 years and over
- Living with a SCI acquired at least 12 months ago (traumatic or non-traumatic)
- Living in the community
- Willing to share your experiences about rebuilding productive life roles
- Able to share experiences in conversational English

#### Participant payment

Participants will receive a \$50 e-gift voucher for participation

#### Contact

To find out more information, scan the QR code or contact Shawna, PhD student, by email on [22118557@student.westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:22118557@student.westernsydney.edu.au)

#### Study Requirements

Participate in a 60-90 minute interview online via zoom, by telephone, or in person.



This study is funded by a PhD scholarship from Spinal Cord Injuries Australia.



This study has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee at Western Sydney University Ethics Reference Number: H16372

### Lived Experience Expert Panel

Are you living with an acquired spinal cord injury (SCI) or a carer/family member/significant other of a person living with SCI? If so, are you interested in being a lived experience expert panel member as part of a research study? Adults with at least 5 years' experience of SCI are invited to participate in consultation sessions with researchers in a new study on rebuilding productive lives post SCI. The study aims to identify the enablers, barriers, supports and services to rebuild life post SCI. Your participation as an expert panel member would involve 4 co-design consultation sessions with the research team. Compensation of \$50 per session is provided. This study has ethical approval from Western Sydney University H16372 and is being funded by Spinal Cord Injuries Australia.

For more information or to express your interest, please email Shawna the PhD student - [22118557@student.westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:22118557@student.westernsydney.edu.au)

### Rebuilding Productive Life Roles after Spinal Cord Injury

#### Invitation to participate in a research study as a Lived Experience Expert

If you are 18 years or older with five or more years of lived experience of spinal cord injury, you may be eligible to participate in a research study that aims to understand how people rebuild their productive life roles after injury as a Lived Experience Expert Panel Member.



#### Are you eligible?

- Adults aged 18 years and over
- Living with an acquired SCI or a carer/family member/significant other of a person living with SCI
- Living in the community and 5 years post SCI event
- Able to review and discuss written documents in English

#### Participant payment

Participants will receive a \$50 e-gift voucher for participation at each stage of the study

#### Contact

To find out more information, scan the QR code or contact Shawna, PhD student, by email on [22118557@student.westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:22118557@student.westernsydney.edu.au)

#### Study Requirements

Participate in 4 x 60-minute co-design workshops online via zoom, telephone or face-to-face over a period of 14 months.



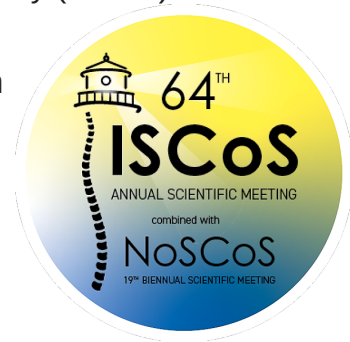
This study is funded by a PhD scholarship from Spinal Cord Injuries Australia.



This study has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee at Western Sydney University Ethics Reference Number: H16372

# International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) update

You are invited to the 64th International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) Annual Scientific Meeting, combined with the 19th Nordic Spinal Cord Society (NoSCoS) Biennial Scientific Meeting, from 8-11 October 2025 in Gothenburg, Sweden.



This annual scientific meeting brings together professionals from across the field of spinal cord injury (SCI) care and research. Whether you're a physiotherapist, neurologist, neurosurgeon, trauma specialist, orthopaedic surgeon, urologist, nurse, therapist, or psychologist, this is an opportunity to connect and collaborate with peers who are dedicated to advancing spinal cord rehabilitation.

### Preliminary program and keynote speakers

ISCoS is pleased to announce that speakers for six Plenary Lectures are now confirmed. [Read more](#) about the keynote speakers and their presentation.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

 <p><b>Guttmann Lecture</b> Professor Fin Biering-Soerensen Denmark</p>	 <p><b>ISCoS Lecture</b> Professor Lisa Harvey Australia</p>	 <p><b>Spinal Research Lecture</b> Professor Mark Tuszynski USA</p>
 <p><b>Wings for Life Lecture</b> Professor Patrick Freund Switzerland</p>	 <p><b>Anthony F DiMarco Lectureship</b> Dr Kajana Satkunendrarajah USA</p>	 <p><b>Special Guest Speakers' Lecture</b> Professor Gregoire Courtine and Professor Jocelyne Bloch Switzerland</p>

The Preliminary Program for the 2025 Annual Scientific Meeting is available to view on the conference website. Wednesday, 8 October will kick off the meeting with the pre-conference day. You can also attend [pre-conference courses](#). The three following days will feature interesting keynote and oral presentations, immersive workshops and instructional courses, innovative poster viewing sessions and industry symposia. Visit the [meeting website](#) to read more about the preliminary program.

Welcome to Gothenburg in October!



Know someone who might like to read our newsletter? Forward it!  
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The Spinal Research Institute is a not-for-profit organisation  
building research collaboration and consumer engagement  
to improve the lives of people with spinal cord injury.

We welcome donations to support our work throughout the year.

[Donate](#)

We are registered with the Australian Charity and Not-for-profits Commission.



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The Spinal Research Institute acknowledges  
the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work,  
the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation.  
We pay our respects to Elders past and present.