



## Edition 3 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.

### Patron's Program for Future Leaders of SCI Research

The Patron's Program Future Leaders of SCI Research initiative, launched in FY22, is a platform for transformative change. With Lady Southey AC's leadership, the inspirational gifts of donors have helped the SRI to grow its vision of creating and supporting a cohort of emerging researchers - our 'Future Leaders'.



Lady Southey AC could see the importance of advancing research so that the lived experience of people with spinal cord injury can be improved. Through the Patron's Program Future Leaders of SCI Research initiative, Lady Southey AC has helped the SRI to begin changing the trajectory of research by growing an engaged cohort of committed, enthused and talented young researchers in this field.

Following the philanthropic leadership of our generous Patron, donations to the Future Leaders initiative for SCI Research Collaboration Grants have helped the

SRI to develop a cohort of 25 future leaders over the last three years. Supporting their individual career growth with the travel grants has been rewarding for us to see. We are sure you will be excited to see how their research projects progress and in the not too distant future, transform the day-to-day lived experience of spinal cord injury.

The SRI is humbled and honoured to work on the Future Leaders initiative with Lady Southey AC and looks forward to sharing the details of our researchers' impactful experiences.

We're pleased to introduce the 2025 SCI Research Collaboration Grant recipients below.

## Introducing our Future Leaders for 2025 awarded SCI Research Collaboration Grants

Thanks to the support of our Patrons Program Future Leaders initiative, the Spinal Research Institute has offered [Research Collaboration Grants](#) to support 11 recipients to attend the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) Annual Scientific Meeting and participate in presentations, networking, workshops and instructional courses. The 64th Annual Scientific Meeting of ISCoS will be held in Gothenburg, Sweden on 8-11 October 2025.



Top row left to right:

**Dr Ram Lochan Yadav**

**University Of Melbourne, Australia**

Ram's research investigates cardiovascular autonomic regulation in individuals with cervical SCI.

**Nadine Fuchs**

**Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA), Australia**

Nadine is working on the eWALK2 trial, a multicentre international randomised controlled trial investigating the effectiveness of spinal stimulation combined with locomotor training in people with SCI.

**Nikhil Chowdhary**

**Institute of Rehabilitation Sciences, Indian Spinal Injury Centre, India**

Nikhil's research evaluates effectiveness of sensory electrical stimulation augmented virtual reality training on sitting balance and quality of life in individuals with incomplete SCI.

**Dr Maya Panisset**

**University Of Melbourne, Australia**

Maya is a Trial Coordinator for the TESCoN trial, investigating transcutaneous spinal cord neuromodulation (tSCN) plus physiotherapy to improve upper limb function in people with tetraplegia.

Middle row left to right:

**Nele Bertels**

**Hasselt University, Belgium**

Nele's PhD research focuses on optimising arm and hand skill training for individuals with cervical SCI.

**Sunpreet Singh Hanspal**

**Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, India**

Sunpreet is the Principal Investigator in the pilot clinical trial: Gamified sensor-based upper extremity functional rehabilitation in individuals with SCI.

**Farjana Taoheed**

**Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed, Bangladesh**

Farjana conducts research on developing low-cost rehabilitative and assistive devices in low resource settings for people with SCI and other neurological conditions.

**Dr Blake Boggenpoel**

**University of the Western Cape, South Africa**

Blake's research focuses on improving care pathways of persons who have sustained traumatic SCI in South Africa.

Bottom row left to right:

### **Janie Provencher**

**Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA), University of New South Wales, Australia**

Janie's research looks at transcutaneous spinal stimulation (TSS) as an accessible intervention to restore movement after SCI.

### **Margaret Mungai**

**Moi Teaching & Referral Hospital, Kenya**

Margaret is working on a skin care intervention program to reduce hospital acquired pressure injury (PI) and improve PI outcomes among SCI patients.

### **Maria Paz Grisales**

**Universidad del Valle, Columbia**

Maria coordinates the International SCI (InSCI) study in Colombia analyzing the relationship between quality of health services and function in people with SCI.

## **World Spinal Cord Injury Day, 5 September 2025**

World SCI Day, initiated by the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS), occurs annually on 5 September. On World SCI Day, we raise awareness of SCI, its causes and prevention, its impact on quality of life, and of course the research that is being undertaken to improve health and social outcomes for people with SCI.



This year, the theme of World SCI Day is 'Fall Prevention, Spinal Cord Protection' and the focus is on fall prevention both within the spinal cord injury community and the population generally. Falls can occur anywhere to anyone, however for those living with SCI, the consequences of falls, even less serious ones, can be much greater.

Here are some ways you can get involved:

- [Tune in to House of Wellness radio](#) at 8am on Sunday 31 August. Nick Morris OAM, Paralympian and SRI Ambassador, will be talking about fall prevention.
- [Visit the SRI's website](#) to view a range of fall prevention resources specially curated for World SCI Day.

# Tune in on 31 August and listen to Nick Morris OAM!

**8AM AEST SUNDAY**

- 2GB Sydney
- 3AW Melbourne
- 4BC Brisbane
- 6PR Perth
- FIVEaa Adelaide



## Changes to the SRI Team and Board

Thank you

**Michèle Whittle**

Michèle Whittle stepped down from the role of Director and Company Secretary in July. We're sincerely grateful for the regulatory, compliance, and business expertise that Michèle brought to the Board, and thank her for her contributions to the SRI over the past two years.



Welcome

**Jenna Chambers**

Jenna Chambers has joined the SRI in the role of Company Secretary. Jenna is an experienced Legal Counsel, Company Secretary, risk, governance and

compliance professional. She has worked across a number of legal practice areas including migration, family law, wills and estates, funds management and class actions and has a particular interest in privacy, data, technology and AI.



Jenna holds a Bachelor of Justice Studies and Bachelor of Laws from University of Canberra as well as a Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice from the College of Law. She is a Certified Information Privacy Manager (CIPM) accredited with the International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP) and an academic sessional in the law faculty at Victoria University.

## What's out there? Keeping SCI research in the conversation

The SRI's Community and Consumer Engagement Manager, Antonio, recently exhibited at What's Out There Day (WOT Day) at the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre. WOT Day is a collaboration between Royal Talbot and AQA Victoria, designed to provide a forum where people with newly acquired spinal cord injuries, their families, and those living with spinal cord injuries in the community can connect, share experiences, and learn from peers.

The event also brings together exhibitors offering a wide range of products and services, from continence supplies to sporting opportunities, reflecting the diverse needs and interests of the community. Research plays an equally important role in the journey of people with spinal cord injuries, and Antonio was there to highlight this dimension. He engaged in conversations with individuals with lived experience, their families, and therapists, emphasising the importance of consumer voices in shaping spinal cord injury research.



Through participation in WOT Days, the SRI reinforces its commitment to ensuring that research is not only about data and outcomes, but also about people's stories, perspectives, and aspirations.

## 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!](#)

## Sincere thanks to the Rotary Club of Kew

Last week the SRI's CEO, Kristine Hendry, was invited to a meeting of the Rotary Club of Kew to accept a donation on behalf of the SRI. This kind gift was the result of a Gala Dinner, which the Rotary Club of Kew held earlier this year. We know how much effort goes into staging such events and we are very appreciative of the time, energy and donations that went into this wonderful evening. We extend a special thank you to the Director of Club Service, Margaret Turner, who led the organising efforts.

This special gift from Rotary Club of Kew will help us to launch a new scholarship, which reflects the spirit of Rotary in deeply caring for the community (see announcement below).



L-R: Joan Scott (Rotary Club of Kew President), Kristine Hendry (SRI CEO),  
Pam Norton (Rotary Club of Kew Immediate Past-President)

## Coming soon! The Associate Professor Doug Brown AM SCI PhD Top-Up Grant

The SRI is excited to announce the Associate Professor Doug Brown AM SCI PhD Top-Up Grant. The grant will be awarded to a PhD student undertaking SCI research at an Australian university. This offering furthers the SRI's commitment to support emerging and early career researchers to build SCI research capability and capacity, with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of people with SCI.

The grant is named in honour of SRI founder, Associate Professor Doug Brown AM, to recognise his more than 40 years of dedicated work in the field of spinal cord injury treatment, care and research, and his commitment to supporting emerging researchers in this field.

Applications open in September. Follow our socials and subscribe to our newsletter to keep up to date on this amazing opportunity.

[Learn more about the grant](#)

**Are you a researcher or clinician working in SCI?  
Have you joined SCoRH yet?**

The Spinal Research Institute launched a new and updated version of the SCoRH platform earlier this year. It has enabled us to interact with members more easily and has facilitated conversations between members.

If you're not a member, [why not sign up now?](#) It's free to join SCoRH, and all events, services and features are free for members.

## **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**

### **Social access and inclusion for people with disability in leisure and recreation**

#### **Recruiting participants living in Australia for an online survey.**

Researchers at Griffith University are looking for people with lived experience of a disability aged 18-34 to complete a survey on the current social inclusion experiences, patterns, and opportunities in leisure for young people with different types of disability. If you are interested, please visit the [project website](#).

### **Can spinal cord stimulation improve quality of life for people with SCI?**

#### **Recruiting participants who live in or near Birmingham, UK.**

Recruitment is ongoing for the STIMEX-SCI study at the University of Birmingham. Do you have, or know of anyone with, an upper-thoracic or cervical SCI and low resting blood pressure? Interested in exploring a novel approach to improve cardiovascular outcomes and exercise performance? If you are interested, please visit the [project website](#).

## Accessing and understanding health information following a spinal cord injury or disorder

### Recruiting participants living in Australia for an online survey.

How do people access and understand health information following a spinal cord injury or disorder? Complete the survey to go into the draw to **win one of five x \$50 Coles/Myer gift cards!** This survey will help researchers in Adelaide understand your health information needs. [Take the survey.](#)

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

### Recruiting participants who live in or near London, UK.

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. [Please complete the expression of interest form.](#)

## Olfactory cell transplantation and intensive rehabilitation to repair chronic spinal cord injury

### Recruiting participants in Australia within daily travelling distance of rehab centres: Making Strides on the Gold Coast, Royal Rehab in Sydney, or The Next Step, in Melbourne. Must be willing and able to travel to Gold Coast for assessments and surgery (if applicable).

Seeking participants for spinal cord injury autologous transplantation and long-term rehabilitation human clinical trial. This study aims to evaluate the effects of a novel therapeutic approach to treat chronic traumatic spinal cord injury. For more information and to express interest, please visit the [project website](#).

The SRI does not assess the scientific validity and/or quality of the evidence underpinning clinical trials. The SRI shares the above for informational purposes only. The SRI recommends that you always seek the advice of your own health professional regarding participation in any trial. [SRI Disclaimer](#).

## Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Week Seminar: Back to Basics - Skin, Bladder & Bowel

You are invited to attend the 2025 estara SCI Awareness Week online Seminar on Thursday 4 September.

Join estara's spinal cord injury nursing team to learn all about the basics of spinal cord injury care.

- Time: 11am-12.30pm (ACST/Adelaide)
- Date: Thursday, 4 September
- Where: Online - register below

Whether you have a spinal cord injury or are a carer, support worker, support coordinator or a healthcare professional, this session is designed to empower and inform and give you the latest information.

The virtual seminar will feature an interactive Q&A session at the end where you can talk directly to estara's nursing team.

[Register now](#)



## International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) update

Secure your place today!

You are invited to attend 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.

Please note that the Early Bird registration deadline closed on 27 July, and the standard rate now applies. Given the exceptional demand for places, you are encouraged to secure your registration promptly. The interactive program enables you to plan your visit in Gothenburg—explore instructional courses, specialist workshops and thematic symposia with ease.

Review the program and register today to guarantee your participation.

Welcome to Gothenburg in October!



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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.

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



The Spinal Research Institute is proud to be supported by



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Our address is

Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre  
1 Yarra Boulevard KEW 3101

[info@thesri.org](mailto:info@thesri.org)

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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.

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