



Edition 4 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.

Thank you for your support in 2025

As the year comes to a close, I would like to thank you for your generous and most valued support in 2025. To our longstanding and loyal donors and to those new to the SRI community, and to those of you who have freely given your time and expertise to support our programs, we are sincerely grateful.

To our colleagues and friends in the spinal cord injury research community around the world, we are proud to be contributing to this ecosystem that is working together to improve the health and quality of life of people with spinal cord injury.

Once again, I am very proud of the impact we have created this year with our three pillars of support: research collaboration, consumer engagement, and supporting our next generation of researchers. Thank you to our partners and the individuals who have supported and participated in our innovative programs to help advance research in this field.



I look forward to sharing the journey with you in 2026, as together we work towards improving the lives of people with spinal cord injury.

On behalf of the Board and Team of the SRI, we send you our warmest wishes for the festive season and look forward to reconnecting with you in the new year.

Fi Slaven

Chair, Spinal Research Institute

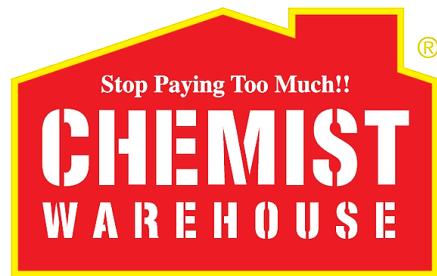


Chemist Warehouse: A new corporate partner for the SRI

We are delighted to announce a new multi-year sponsorship with Chemist Warehouse, building on a strong partnership developed over the past few years through a series of successful media collaborations.

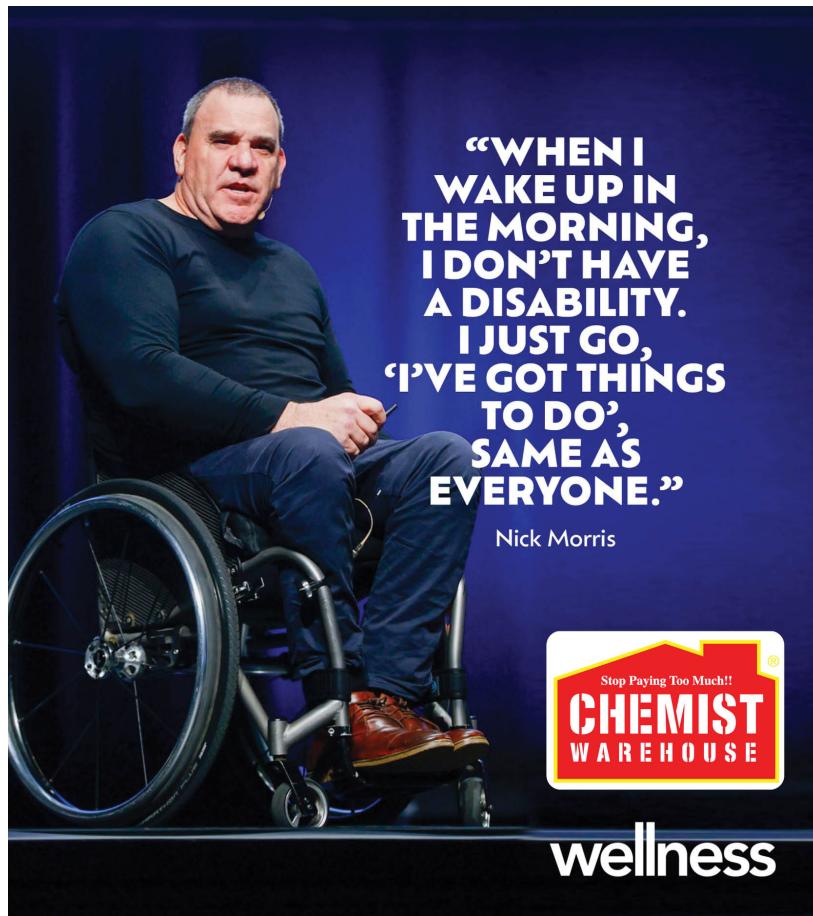
This exciting sponsorship will provide the SRI with valuable national media exposure across Chemist Warehouse's radio, television, and print platforms. It will also enable the SRI to develop an innovative three-year program focused on promoting community health, wellness, and prevention, while generating vital funds to advance spinal cord injury research.

An early example of what's to come from this partnership was the recent Falls Prevention Campaign featured in The House of Wellness radio and print media in August. The campaign showcased Nick Morris OAM, SRI Ambassador and former Board member (see campaign image below), who shared practical tips for avoiding falls at home and in the community. Through his unique perspective,



Nick not only reinforced the importance of injury prevention but also raised awareness of spinal cord injury and disability more broadly.

We are thrilled to be partnering with Chemist Warehouse, whose generous support is helping the SRI amplify our mission - to improve the everyday health and wellbeing of people living with spinal cord injury so they can live their best lives.



Announcing the first recipient of the Associate Professor Doug Brown AM SCI PhD Top-Up Grant!

The SRI is delighted to announce that the inaugural recipient of the [Associate Professor Doug Brown AM SCI PhD Top-Up Grant](#) is Melina Haritopoulou-Sinanidou (pictured right). Melina's PhD project is titled "Harnessing the power of spatial 'omics' to identify regulators of spinal cord injury repair" and her research focuses on molecular regulators of immune response and wound healing after SCI, with the aim of identifying novel therapeutic targets.



This top-up aligns with 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.

Finding community and inspiration - the SRI's Larnie Ball shares her ISCoS experience

Stepping into the role of International Research Collaborations Manager less than a year ago, I knew I had joined a vibrant global SCI community but nothing prepared me for the experience of attending my first ISCoS (International Spinal Cord Society Annual Scientific Meeting) in Gothenburg. ISCoS 2025, held in partnership with the Nordic Spinal Cord Society (NoSCoS), drew about 1,100 delegates from 52 countries and created a dynamic meeting of international expertise. Supporting the SRI's 11 SCI Collaboration Grant recipients as they presented, networked, and found their place within this global gathering has been one of the highlights of my role so far.



One of the most energising moments of the week was the SRI Early Career Researchers Breakfast - a by-special-invitation opportunity for this year's SCI Collaboration Grant recipients to meet one another, connect with past recipients, and spend time with senior researchers/mentors and the SRI team before the scientific sessions began. The event echoed one of the conference's strongest themes: that meaningful progress in spinal cord injury research relies on genuine collaboration across disciplines, countries, and career stages.

[Read more](#)



Above: Larnie Ball, fifth from right, with the eleven 2025 SCI Collaboration Grant Recipients

The SRI's SCI Collaboration Grants are generously supported by the [Patron's Program Future Leaders of SCI Research](#) initiative. You will hear more from the 2025 grant recipients in our first newsletter of 2026.

The role of nurses helping to engage consumers with research

At the Australasian Rehabilitation Nursing Association Conference held in Melbourne on 23–24 October, Antonio Vecchio, the SRI's Community & Consumer Engagement Manager, was invited to speak with nurses about their important role in rehabilitation and the active use of research. He highlighted that nurses should regularly engage with research to build their knowledge and strengthen everyday practice.

Antonio emphasised that rehabilitation is a shared process, not a set of instructions. Nurses support this by translating research findings into clear, practical information that patients can understand and use. Through ongoing learning, nurses reduce barriers that often limit consumer access to evidence-based information, ensuring research is not confined to academic or clinical settings.

Nurses are central to the flow of information between research and consumers and play a key role in building trust in the place research holds in everyday life. By listening closely to patient needs, concerns and priorities, nurses connect evidence to real-world experiences and daily challenges. This approach helps patients recognise how research informs care decisions and supports improvements in quality of life. Through ongoing dialogue, nurses reinforce the

value of research as something practical and relevant, shaping rehabilitation as a partnership where evidence supports meaningful, day-to-day outcomes.



If you have lived experience of SCI and want to learn more about research, participate in research, or share your lived experience to help inform research, join our [dedicated consumer mailing list](#).

SRI Strategy Day

The SRI's Board and Team recently came together for a strategy review day. It was an opportunity to connect, reflect on our current strategy and collaborate on new ideas and initiatives.

Activities of the day included a review of the key areas of focus and progress over the last 18 months. Strategic questions were discussed and debated, with insights from the day informing the SRI's priorities and focus over the next 18 months.



Back row: Craig Macaulay, Professor Marc Ruitenberg, Jenna Chambers, Grant Norton, Fiona Low, Claire Backhouse (on screen), Dr Glenn Cartwright, Deirdre Mori, Kristine Hendry, Frank Nigro, Fi Slaven.

Front row: Cameron Brown, Dr Caroline McFarlane, Charlie Heerey, Antonio Vecchio, Dr Mario D'Cruz, Larnie Ball.

Sharing our impact over the past year

The SRI's [2025 Impact Report](#) is now available - read about our programs and the impact they are having both in our local community and globally. The report emphasises the SRI's commitment to collaborative research, consumer engagement, and supporting early-career researchers to improve health outcomes for individuals with spinal cord injuries.

2025 IMPACT REPORT



Improving the lives of people with spinal cord injury through research collaboration, capacity building, and consumer engagement.

Did you know the SRI has an online platform for SCI researchers and clinicians?

If you're a researcher or clinician working with an interest in spinal cord injury, are you a member of SCoRH, the SRI's [Spinal Cord Research Hub](#)? If not, consider becoming a member today. It is free to join SCoRH, and it is open to researchers and clinicians around the world. With new members joining all the time, SCoRH provides opportunities for networking. It is also home to a number of active research groups across a range of areas.



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

Assessing the reliability and relative validity of the rapid prime diet quality score screener (rPDQS) in adults with SCI

Recruiting participants living in Australia for an online survey.

University of Sydney researchers are conducting a study to assess the validity and reliability of a quick diet quality tool to inform nutrition care. Access the survey [here](#).

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

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 spinal cord injury or disorder (SCI/D). Participants will be surveyed to understand their health information needs, and the role that family, peers, and healthcare providers play in supporting health literacy. Access the survey [here](#).

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 always you seek the advice of your own health professional regarding participation in any trial. [SRI Disclaimer](#).

International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) update



Abstract submission for ISCoS 2026 is now open!

The 2026 [International Spinal Cord Society Annual Scientific Meeting](#) will be held 7-10 October in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Submissions are welcomed from clinicians, researchers, scientists, and early-career investigators to share their work and contribute to global advancements in spinal cord injury (SCI) care.

Presenting at ISCoS 2026 provides international exposure, collaboration with leading experts, and the opportunity to strengthen the impact of your research.

Presentation types:

- 75-minute Instructional Course/Workshop
- Oral Presentation
- Poster Presentation

Submit your abstract by **10 March 2026** and join a global SCI community advancing innovation, rehabilitation, and improved outcomes.

[Read more about abstract submission](#)

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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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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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