EDITOR'S PAGE

IPSCI: a WHO and ISCoS collaboration report

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Dear *Spinal Cord* reader,

The collaboration between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) has grown substantially over the past few years. There has been a considerable focus on the SCI education and prevention, including workshops and seminars around the globe.

The 2012 launch of the www.elearnSCI.org was a major step forward in the dissemination of information on prevention and treatment of SCI. Evenly important are the classification systems for use of data in relation to SCI prevention, treatment, and research, the International Classification of External Cause of Injury (ICECI), the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).

In the last few years a major joint project, has been the International Perspectives on Spinal Cord Injury (IPSCI). This high level WHO report was officially launched on 3rd December 2013 at WHO Headquarters in Geneva coinciding with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. A single Report from the highest health political authority is now available that is dedicated solely to SCI covering all relevant topics and in a global perspective. IPSCI summarizes the best available evidence on the causes, prevention, care and lived experience of people with SCI and makes specific recommendations that states and other key stakeholders can take to improve the lives of individuals with SCI. The Report hereby directly relates its focus of attention to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its aspirations for inclusion and participation allowing for signatory states to be reminded of their obligations in relation to the rights of persons with disabilities in general and SCI in particular. As the WHO Director General Dr Margaret Chan emphasises in her preface to the Report, SCI can be seen as an opportunity in two ways. The care and provisions needed for SCI are a challenge for almost every aspects of a health system in turn meaning that meeting this challenge will lead to a better response to a wide range of other health conditions. The same holds true for improvements in accessibility and provision of assistive devices benefiting other people with disabilities or older people. In particular the Report highlights essential measures for improving the survival, health and participation of people with SCI, such as both timely and appropriate pre-hospital, acute and post-acute care and rehabilitation management as well as access to on-going health care, health education and products leading to a reduced risk of secondary conditions and improving overall quality of life. Evenly important is the availability and continuing education of skilled providers of medical care and rehabilitation services. The Report highlights the importance of legislation, policy and programmes promoting accessible environments (homes, schools, workplaces, hospitals and transportation), inclusive education, vocational rehabilitation, employment and alternative forms of economic self-sufficiency (micro-finance), social support payments that do not act as disincentive to return to work and ways to target discrimination in educational and employment settings.

It is now for a wide range of stakeholders, including health professionals in the field of SCI, systems and service providers and developers, policy makers from different sectors (health, education, employment, social affairs) and researchers to closely study the report's findings and facilitate and actively implement its recommendations in their settings and spheres of influence. Adoption of the report by WHO member governments has the potential to improve strategies of prevention of SCI and to bring about great improvement in the services available to those with SCI to their benefit and to the benefit of their families, communities and society in general. ISCoS will work with WHO, national governments and other NGOs to put the recommendations into practice. ISCoS and WHO will continue to join forces in areas where they can make the greatest difference, especially in prevention and educational issues worldwide.

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