

EDITOR'S PAGE

ISCoS and World Health Organisation: a new frontier for cooperation and development



S Aito and H Chhabra
ISCoS council members

Dear *Spinal Cord* reader,

ISCoS has officially been recognised as an NGO by the World Health Organisation. Our Society, then, besides improving the knowledge of the pathologies derived by spinal cord impairments and promoting research and continuous cultural interchange among clinicians and researchers, will be more and more directed towards the implementation of new prevention strategies and the establishment of new specialised centres. In order to reach such goals, that represent an essential part of our mission, it is mandatory to sensitize and involve the civil society.

ISCoS shall advise, encourage, guide and support the efforts of those responsible for the care of people with spinal cord lesions and when requested, coordinate these activities throughout the world. It should then advertise its issues towards the political world, the public administrators, the productive society, health and charity organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders. *Our collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) is an essential part of this issue.*

We have worked along with WHO officers and with them we have published IPSCI (International Perspectives on Spinal Cord Injury), that summarizes the best available evidence and suggests measures for improving the survival, health and participation of people with spinal cord injury. ISCoS and WHO will continue to join forces in areas where they can make the greatest difference, especially in prevention and educational issues worldwide. Such collaboration has finally resulted in the official acknowledgment of ISCoS by WHO, as one of the most significant organization in the field of Spinal Cord Injuries.

In order to attend this role, ISCoS mission includes the better understanding of the phenomenon of Spinal Cord Injuries (SCI) worldwide by the epidemiological point of view, with the aim of proposing the most appropriate prevention strategies to the public administrators and governments, given that causes of Spinal Cord Injuries are very different from one area of the globe to another. ISCoS is then more and more becoming an Organisation whose role is also represented by the capacity of influencing the health political strategies both in the fields of prevention and treatment. In our role of NGO and representatives of the civil society, we are invited by WHO to participate to the regional meetings as well as to the plenary global meetings. In Turkey, last September 2013, the European regional meeting was held. In that occasion we stressed the importance of enhancing the prevention strategies of major traumas and Spinal Cord Lesions and the necessity to cover all European areas with specialised centres, in order to give all the European citizens the same chances of surviving and having an acceptable quality of life with the right social integration (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drWM0ZqGELI>).

ISCoS is now supporting the establishment of a Spinal Unit in Albania, where, at the moment, the needed specialised assistance is absent. It has designated one of its members as Ambassador to Albania and, together with the local Authorities, is driving such project, also by providing the needed education to the involved health professionals.

With the same aim ISCoS has previously created an Internet based learning platform, able to give both the basic and advanced knowledge to all those interested in such issue. Recognising the need to disseminate information about comprehensive management of Spinal Cord Injury (SCI), ISCoS took the initiative to develop elearnSCI.org, a web-based teaching and educational resource. The content has been developed by 332 leading SCI professionals and educationists from around the world and reflects realities in both high and low resource settings. It will be of relevance to students, those new to the field of SCI and to SCI practitioners everywhere. This program is totally free and may be used by doctors of different disciplines, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers and peer consultants.

We are sure that our collaboration with WHO will contribute to enhance the efforts towards the goals of ISCoS and finally to serve the persons with SCI.

It will represent another very important challenge that we are proud to deal with.