



PSYCHOSOCIAL NEWS:

The SSCIS Psychosocial Strategy for People with a Spinal Cord Injury Newsletter

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The role of the **psychosocial strategy** is to assist you in gaining the knowledge and skills you need to effectively support the psychosocial wellbeing of people with SCI .

You know and understand what works for you in your practice setting, so your thoughts and ideas can make a difference.

If you have any ideas on what could assist you in your practice, if you would like to be further involved in specific working groups or have any comments about the strategy, your input is welcome! Please contact your representative on the Steering Group to feedback your thoughts and ideas, or contact the Chair of the Steering Committee directly.

Do you need something more?

For further resources on psychosocial aspects of SCI visit

<http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/networks/spinal-cord-injury/resources>

where you can download the [Guide for Health Professionals on the Psychosocial Care of People with SCI](#) and the [Directory of Information and Support](#)

Turning into Pain – How mindfulness is changing the way we cope with CHRONIC Pain . By E Holden, Austin Mindfulness Centre, USA

What would happen if you placed your hand on a hot stove burner? Would you stand there with your hand on the stove? No. You would probably pull your hand away immediately to avoid getting burned.

Your body has numerous defences to protect you from pain and injury including muscle tension and the *Fight or Flight Response*. Naturally we want to remove or distract ourselves from painful stimuli or situations. Similarly, our negative evaluation of pain can also serve as a safety mechanism. Such judgments make us vigilant and incite us to flee from immediate danger. Yet, what happens when physical pain and the anticipation of pain cannot be avoided and becomes a prolonged or permanent state.

In the case of persistent pain, negative evaluations of pain and or wishing these sensations away is unproductive and can intensify the subjective perception of pain. Moreover, people with chronic pain may also experience some degree of negative self evaluation, feelings of guilt, and/or responsibility for their condition (American Psychological Association, 2015). Currently, one hundred million Americans/ 20% of the Australian population suffer from chronic pain and are vulnerable to emotional and physical distress related to this condition. Many will also see numerous specialists, undergo various medical procedures and medication treatments and adverse side effects, for minimal or no relief. (American Academy of Pain Medicine, 2015)

Yet, where medical treatments come to a standstill in pain management, mindfulness has emerged as an **alternative or supplemental treatment**. While encouraging people to increase their attention to pain seems paradoxical, numerous specialists believe that increased awareness is the precise thing to help mitigate, cope with, and transform chronic physical pain. **Research shows that individuals with chronic pain who engage in mindfulness meditation demonstrate greater activation of brain regions that regulate emotion and pain.** They also report lower pain levels following mindfulness exercises. These benefits may occur with as little as 20 minutes of meditation a day over a 4 day period (Zeidan, Martucci, Kraft, Gordon, McHaffie, Coghill, 2011).

Jon Kabat-Zinn, creator of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Clinic and the Centre for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, is a leading figure in the mindfulness movement helping people cope with stress, anxiety, pain, and illness.

Kabat-Zinn (1994) defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”

In his Mindfulness- Based approach to Stress and Pain Reduction, a program based on 30 years helping patients with chronic pain conditions, Kabat-Zinn offers that by increasing your awareness of intense and painful regions of the body, you can cultivate a new relationship with physical pain and with your own mind and body. He invites listeners to notice the regions of the body that are free from pain and the body regions that are hurting, “just a quick toe in the water and then out” (Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

Mindfulness does not aim to make the pain be a certain way. It fosters acceptance of pain as it is. The hope is that mindfulness may help people to discover **new ways of being in relation to pain**. Pain may be unavoidable in life, but perhaps suffering is optional to some degree. Mindfulness, as Kabat-Zinn describes, “It’s as much play as it is work. It is a throwing yourself into the dance whether the music is something of your choosing or not, as something of an experiment, an adventure in reclaiming your life to whatever degree is possible” (2009).

References

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American Psychological Association (APA). (2015). Stress effects on the body. Accessed from <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-body.aspx>.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). Wherever you go there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life. New York: Hyperion Books.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2009). Mindfulness meditation for pain relief: Guided practices for reclaiming your body and your life – audio book.

Zeidan, F., Martucci, K., Kraft, R., Gordon, N., McHaffie, J., Coghill, R. (2011). *Behavioural/systems/ cognitive brain mechanisms supporting the modulation of pain by Mindfulness meditation. The Journal of Neuroscience, April 6, 31(14) 5540 –5548.* Accessed from <http://www.jneurosci.org/content/31/14/5540.full.pdf+html>

The SSCIS Psychosocial Steering Committee Update

The SSCIS Psychosocial . Current representatives include:

- ◆ Annalisa Dezarnaulds (Chair), Clinical Psychologist, SIU, Prince of Wales Hospital
annalisa.dezarnaulds@health.nsw.gov.au
- ◆ James Middleton, Director, SSCIS -james.middleton@sydney.edu.au
- ◆ Catherine Ephraums, Clinical Psychologist, SCIU, Royal Rehab
- ◆ Dallas Pirronello, Occupational Therapist, Spinal Outreach Service, Royal Rehab
- ◆ Beverley Berelowitz, Social Worker, SIU, Prince of Wales Hospital.
- ◆ Neil McKinnon, Manager, iCare, NSW.
- ◆ Ralf Ilchef, Consultation Liaison Psychiatrist, RNSH
- ◆ Helen Tonkin, Social Worker, RNSH
- ◆ Sky Fosbrooke, Physio, Rehabilitation Paediatric Services Children's Hospital, Randwick

We Welcome

Anne Marie Sarandrea, Clinical Psychologist, Kids Rehab at The Children's Hospital at Westmead; Christina Donnelly, Psychologist, Hunter Spinal Service; Chris Nicholls, General Manager, Head of Operations, Spinal Cord Injuries Australia, and hoping to have a PARAQUAD REP very soon.

For further information on the work of the Psychosocial Strategy Steering Committee please contact

Annalisa Dezarnaulds via email:

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or on 02 93825645

THE SPINAL CORE
COURSE
ROYAL NORTH
SHORE HOSPITAL
1-5TH AUGUST

ANZCOS 2016

Adelaide, Glenelg
SCI CARE: At the forefront on the foreshore.
16-18 Nov

www.anzscos2016.com

How exciting to know that Prof Paul Kennedy, Clinical Psychologist, Stoke Mandeville and Oxford University has been invited as one of the guest speakers.

Things YOU should know about

The Emotional Wellbeing Quick Reference Guide and Flip Chat for those working in Spinal Cord Injury produced by the **NSW SSCIS Psychosocial Steering Community** is soon to be launched to the national Spinal Cord Injury Community. **Stay tuned!**

"THE SCI Pain Course Macquarie University

An Internet-Delivered Program for Chronic Pain and Emotional Wellbeing in adults with a SCI. This free course helps people to manage chronic pain and symptoms of anxiety and depression.

www.ecentreclinic.org

Email: contact@ecentreclinic.org

The SCI Pain Course at Greenwich Hospital Hammond Care [http://](http://www.greenwichhospital.com.au/services/pain-management/program)

www.greenwichhospital.com.au/services/pain-management/program

Check out the latest MEDITATION APPS !!

The digital mindfulness guides for a more relaxed and meaningful existence. The benefits of meditating range from making you more focused and productive to increasing your happiness and strengthening your heart. In a busy and complicated world, these smart apps will help you make the most of being mindful for a more enriching experience.

1. FOR BEGINNERS

THE APP: I Giant Mind

WHAT IT DOES: Learning to meditate is easy with this free app that offers simple instructions created to teach you how to meditate. With a variable timer, video tutorials, and a troubleshooting resource, the three-level program is designed to cover all the basics in a few short sessions.

AVAILABLE ON: Google Play, iOS

2. FOR AN ALL-ROUND MINDFUL EXPERIENCE THE APP: The Mindfulness App

WHAT IT DOES: Considered one of the most popular meditation apps out there, this app is suitable for everyone. It features 4 rejuvenating guided meditations led by mindfulness experts as well as 4 beautiful silent meditations with accompanying bells. On top of the programmed meditations that last for either 3, 5, 15 or 30 minutes, there's also a custom option that can be set for any length.

AVAILABLE ON: Google Play, iOS

3. FOR KIDS

THE APP: Smiling Mind

WHAT IT DOES: A modern meditation tool specifically designed for young people, Smiling Mind offers free mindfulness-based meditations that are geared towards specific age groups, starting from the age of seven right through to young adults. The app provides action-based tools to guide children through Mindfulness Meditation practices in a simple and easy to use format.

AVAILABLE ON: Web, iOS

The Asian Spinal Cord Injury Network (ASCION) has developed **Psychosocial Guidelines for Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation.**

<http://www.iscos.org.uk/enews-9th-feb-2016> there was an article on the development and launch of the Psychosocial Guidelines for Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation available at http://www.ascon.info/psycho_guide.htm

BREAKING NEWS !!

We are delighted to announce the recruitment of Clinical Psychologists, Skye Dong at RNSH Spinal Unit; Anne Marie Sarandrea in Kids Rehab, The Children's Hospital, Westmead; Tony Hollins at the Pain Clinic, POWH and Psychologist, Christina Donnelly at the Hunter Spinal Injury Service. Congratulations to you all!