



# 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

**Emotional Wellbeing Toolkit—A Clinicians Guide to Working with Spinal Cord Injury**

**Guide for Health Professionals on the Psychosocial Care of People with SCI**

and the

**Directory of Information and Support**

## The Psychosocial Strategy for Spinal Cord Injury—10 years on

Spinal cord injury (SCI) is a catastrophic injury with a complex presentation from both a medical and psychological perspective, including pain, fatigue, substance abuse and frequent hospitalisations<sup>1</sup>. In 2005 Prof Paul Kennedy visited Sydney as the inaugural NSW Office for Science and Medical Research Spinal Exchange Program Fellow. He advocated for the importance of psychosocial issues for those adjusting to and living with a spinal cord injury. With the objective of improving the quality of life for people with a SCI, Prof Kennedy facilitated communication on techniques, and therapies focussing on the psychosocial rehabilitation of people with SCI.

Psychosocial issues are considered ‘everyone’s business’, meaning that all health professionals can affect the wellbeing of someone in their care so it is important that they understand how to enhance the individual’s wellbeing. This is not just the domain of social workers, psychologists or psychiatrists.

Following Prof Kennedy’s visit, the NSW State Spinal Cord Injury Service (SSCIS) established the Psychosocial Strategy Steering Committee which has developed a number of resources to promote the psychosocial care of people with SCI. These resources are designed to help health professionals working with people with SCI.

### Guide for Health Professionals on the Psychosocial Care of People with a Spinal Cord Injury

The Guide aims to provide direction and support to relevant health professionals who are involved in the rehabilitation of people with SCI. A collaborative approach with the individual, their family, carers and other professionals involved in their care, to decisions about treatment and ongoing care is promoted in accord with the self-management and resilience model approaches to SCI care.

### Directory of Information and Support

The directory provides guidance about specific services, sources of support and information on the psychological and social consequences of SCI. It is a resource for people who have acquired an SCI, as well as their family and friends and the professionals working with them.

### Emotional Wellbeing Toolkit: A Clinician’s Guide to Working with Spinal Cord Injury

Every interaction that every health professional has with a client provides an opportunity to either hinder or enhance the adjustment to injury of the person with a SCI. When a person is in crisis, they are more likely to be influenced by others than when everything is going smoothly. Therefore crises present opportunities to promote coping ability and mental health. The successful mastery of life crises can lead to psychological growth<sup>2</sup>.

The Emotional Wellbeing Toolkit is designed to educate and provide guidance to all health professionals working with people with a SCI who are experiencing difficulties and may be in crisis. The Toolkit is an evidence-based resource containing validated and standardised assessment tools to facilitate staff decision-making about the need to call on mental health professional assistance. The Toolkit will help all staff to improve their understanding of psychosocial issues and to understand the critical role they play in assisting their clients in crises and with long-term adjustment.

### References:

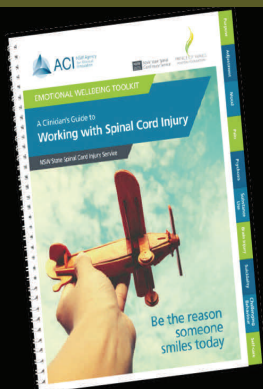
- 1: Middleton J., Nicholson Perry K., Craig A. A clinical perspective on the need for psychosocial care guidelines in spinal cord injury rehabilitation. *International Journal of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* 2014; 2(5):1-6.
- 2: Moos R., & Tsu V. Human competence and coping. In: Moos R., editor. *Human adaptation: Coping with life crises*. Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1976.

For further information on the work of the Psychosocial Strategy

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The TOOLKIT covers topics such as managing grief and trauma, common psychological and emotional issues experienced by people with a spinal cord injury, and ideas for handling challenging behaviours.

## ANZCOS 2016

Adelaide, Glenelg

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16-18 Nov

[www.anzscos2016.com](http://www.anzscos2016.com)

## The SSCIS Psychosocial Steering Committee

The SSCIS Psychosocial . Current representatives include:

- ◆ Annalisa Dezarnaulds (Chair), Clinical Psychologist, SIU, Prince of Wales Hospital
- ◆ [annalisa.dezarnaulds@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:annalisa.dezarnaulds@health.nsw.gov.au)
- ◆ James Middleton, Director, SSCIS -[james.middleton@sydney.edu.au](mailto:james.middleton@sydney.edu.au)
- ◆ Catherine Ephraums, Clinical Psychologist, Spinal Injury Unit, Royal Rehab
- ◆ Dallas Pirronello, Occupational Therapist, Spinal Outreach Service, Royal Rehab
- ◆ Beverley Berelowitz, Social Worker, SIU, Prince of Wales Hospital.
- ◆ Neil McKinnon, Manager, iCare/ alternate; Gary Kent Senior Project Officer - Vocational Programs, LTCSA NSW.
- ◆ Helen Tonkin, Social Worker, Royal North Shore Hospital. Spinal Unit
- ◆ Sky Fosbrooke, Physio, Rehabilitation Paediatric Services Children's Hospital, Randwick
- ◆ Anne Marie Sarandrea, Clinical Psychologist, Kids Rehab, Children's Hospital Westmead
- ◆ Christina Donnelly, Psychologist, Hunter Spinal Cord Injury Service
- ◆ Mathew Smith, Social Worker, ParaQuad.
- ◆ Chris Nicholl Operations Manager, SCIA
- ◆ Associate: Dr Ralf Ilchef, Consultation Liaison Psychiatrist, RNSH

## Toolkit Launch

**The Emotional Wellbeing Toolkit:  
A Clinicians Guide to Working with Spinal Cord Injury**  
will be launched on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016  
at the Spinal Injury Unit of the Prince of Wales Hospital.

## Things you should know about

**The Toolkit** is available as a pdf on the ACI website: [www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/326435/spinal-emotional-wellbeing-toolkit.pdf](http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/326435/spinal-emotional-wellbeing-toolkit.pdf)

**The Brief Psychosocial Clinical Assessment Tool:** an assessment sheet to be used in conjunction with the Toolkit and is available at [www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/327999/Brief-Psychosocial-Clinical-Assessment-Tool.pdf](http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/327999/Brief-Psychosocial-Clinical-Assessment-Tool.pdf)

### **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](http://www.ecentreclinic.org)  
Email: [contact@ecentreclinic.org](mailto:contact@ecentreclinic.org)

### **The SCI Pain Course at Greenwich Hospital**

[www.greenwichhospital.com.au/services/pain-management/program](http://www.greenwichhospital.com.au/services/pain-management/program)

## With Sadness

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the death of Prof Paul Kennedy, Clinical Psychologist, Stoke Mandeville and Oxford University.

Paul was passionate about developing clinical psychological support for those affected by spinal cord injury and involving clinical psychology in the rehabilitation process after injury. Paul was in Australia in 2006 as a visiting Fellow and was instrumental in establishing the Psychosocial Strategy for spinal cord injury.