

SMSF Research Strategy 2012-2017: Executive summary

The Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, National Spinal Injuries Centre (NSIC) and Stoke Mandeville Spinal Foundation have agreed to work in partnership for the next 5 years to develop the spinal research agenda. The Foundation aims to develop, expand and deliver clinically relevant research to enhance the quality of living with spinal cord injury (SCI).

Core Aims

- Aim 1) To undertake and support the conduct of **world-class research** that enhances the quality of life through improved treatments, rehabilitation and prevention of complications following SCI.
- Aim 2) To establish a **professional scientific framework** within the NSIC that enables the conduct and dissemination of high quality SCI research.
- Aim 3) To bring together the **stakeholders** of SCI research and utilize relevant data sources necessary for the evaluation of the complex nature of SCI health care delivery.

Development of the strategy

After initial drafting of the document by the newly appointed research director, both internal and external peer review of the *Stoke Mandeville Spinal Foundation Research Strategy 2012-2017 document* was organized and completed in July 2012.

Being the National rehabilitation centre for SCI patients, the Foundation believes that the NSIC should take the lead in establishing a national research agenda with all relevant stakeholders being involved. It is anticipated that this process will take approximately 2 years time to complete. This means that in the meantime the Foundation will adhere to its *initial research agenda*. Once the national research agenda has been set, the Foundation will see where the initial research themes fit into the definitive priorities.

Research Themes & Focal Points

For 2012 to 2014, the foundation will focus on research projects that fall under the following main themes:

- Theme 1) Acute care and rehabilitation following SCI.
- Theme 2) Independent living after SCI.
- Theme 3) Prevention and management of adverse events.

SMSF Research Strategy 2012-2017: Executive summary (*continued*)

Three cross-cutting “focal points” have been selected from the three research themes, which receive special attention:

- Focal Point 1) Novel techniques and assistive devices enhancing functional activities.
- Focal Point 2) Effective health service delivery for spinal cord injury.
- Focal Point 3) Age-related health issues in spinal cord injury rehabilitation.

Specific research projects that fall under these themes and focal points, including a multi-centre surgical study and a pan-European paediatric SCI study, will be described on the Foundation’s website. It is the Foundation’s aim to find collaborators pursuing the same aims and objectives and to distinguish itself from organizations solely focusing on laboratory research.

Key deliverables

Milestones Year 1; June 2013:

- Research directions: Established a ‘Priority Setting Partnership’ steering committee.
- Research governance: Introduction of refined NSIC research quality criteria & SOPs.
- Data collection: Evaluating and enhancing clinical information management for research purposes, initiation standardized prospective collection core data sets.
- Collaboration: Explore possibilities for long-term national & international collaborative partnerships; encourage ‘acute SCI care deliverers’ to work towards an ‘Acute-Rehab bridge’.

Milestones Year 3; June 2015:

- Research directions: Completed PSP & redefined SMSF Research agenda.
- Research activities: First randomized controlled trial underway. Prospective, multicenter comparative cohort studies underway.
- Collaboration: Established international collaboration group.

Milestones Year 5; June 2017:

- First randomized controlled trial and multi-center comparative studies completed and published.
- Grant applications: Successful NIHR/ large international grant application.
- Accreditation: Obtained accreditation as a professional scientific framework: ‘Centre of Excellence’ for SCI research by a designated international organisation.
- Collaboration: Established and internationally recognized translational research hub.