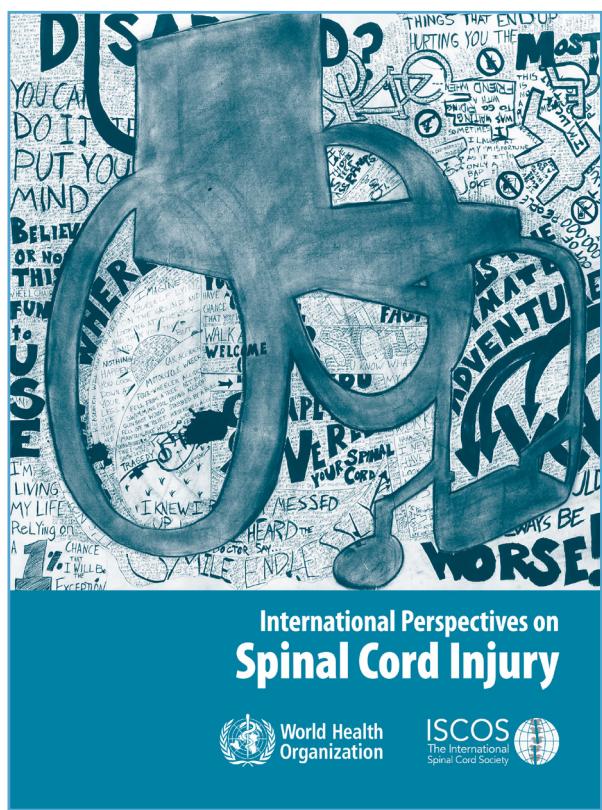


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World Health Organization

## INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON SPINAL CORD INJURY



EXPECTED DECEMBER 2013

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International Perspectives on Spinal Cord Injury assembles and summarizes the best available scientific evidence on SCI in particular the epidemiology, services, interventions and policies, together with the lived experience of people with spinal cord injury (SCI) across the life course and throughout the world. The Report makes recommendations for actions based on this evidence that are consistent with the aspirations for inclusion and participation as expressed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The report has been developed in association with the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) and with support from Swiss Paraplegic Research (SPF).

SCI is a medically complex and life-disrupting condition, that has considerable consequences, both for individuals and society. People are left dependent, are excluded from school, and are less likely to be employed. Worst of all, they risk premature death. SCI is both a public health and human rights challenge. With the right policy responses, it is possible to live, thrive and contribute with SCI anywhere in the world. Once a person with SCI has had their immediate health needs met, social and environmental barriers are the main obstacles to successful functioning and inclusion in society. It is essential to ensure that health services, education, transport and employment are available and accessible to people with SCI, alongside other people with disabilities. SCI will always be life-changing, but it need not be a catastrophe.

WHO and ISCoS will launch the Report on 3 December 2013, International Day of Persons with Disabilities. A website with life stories of people affected by SCI, and related advocacy and media materials, will accompany the publication of the report, which will be available in English as both the full report and in summary version, with French and other language versions to follow.

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## WHAT'S INSIDE THIS PUBLICATION?

*"Spinal cord injury need not be a death sentence. But this requires effective emergency response and proper rehabilitation services, which are currently not available to the majority of people in the world. Once we have ensured survival, then the next step is to promote the human rights of people with spinal cord injury, alongside other persons with disabilities. All this is as much about awareness as it is about resources. I welcome this important report, because it will contribute to improved understanding and therefore better practice."*

Shuaib Chalken, UN Special rapporteur on disability

*"Spina bifida is no obstacle to a full and useful life. I've been a Paralympic champion, a wife, a mother, a broadcaster and a member of the upper house of the British Parliament. It's taken grit and dedication, but I'm certainly not superhuman. All of this was only made possible because I could rely on good healthcare, inclusive education, appropriate wheelchairs, an accessible environment, and proper welfare benefits. I hope that policy-makers everywhere will read this report, understand how to tackle the challenge of spinal cord injury, and take the necessary actions."*

Tanni Grey-Thompson, Paralympic medallist and member of UK House of Lords

*"Disability is not incapability, it is part of the marvelous diversity we are surrounded by. We need to understand that persons with disability do not want charity, but opportunities. Charity involves the presence of an inferior and a superior who, "generously", gives what he does not need, while solidarity is given between equals, in a horizontal way among human beings who are different, but equal in their rights. We need to eliminate the barriers, construct a way to liberty: the liberty of being different. This is true inclusion."*

Lenín Moreno, Former Vice-president of the Republic of Ecuador

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