



Edition 3 for 2024!

Plexus is the quarterly newsletter of the Spinal Research Institute (SRI). Read on for news updates on SRI's philanthropic program, staff news, program updates, and news for consumers and researchers.

SRI featured in House of Wellness magazine!

This month, the SRI is excited to be featured in the House of Wellness magazine August edition. The editorial profiles the SRI and how our programs translate into real world impact

for people with spinal cord injury. You can grab your own copy of the House of Wellness magazine from Chemist Warehouse.





Coming soon! The Landscape of Spinal Cord Injury Research in Australia (2018 - 2023)

To coincide with World SCI Day on 5 September, the SRI will launch a new report, The Landscape of Spinal Cord Injury Research in Australia (2018 - 2023). This report is the first of its kind to take a thorough look at the landscape of Australian SCI research, both in progress and completed.

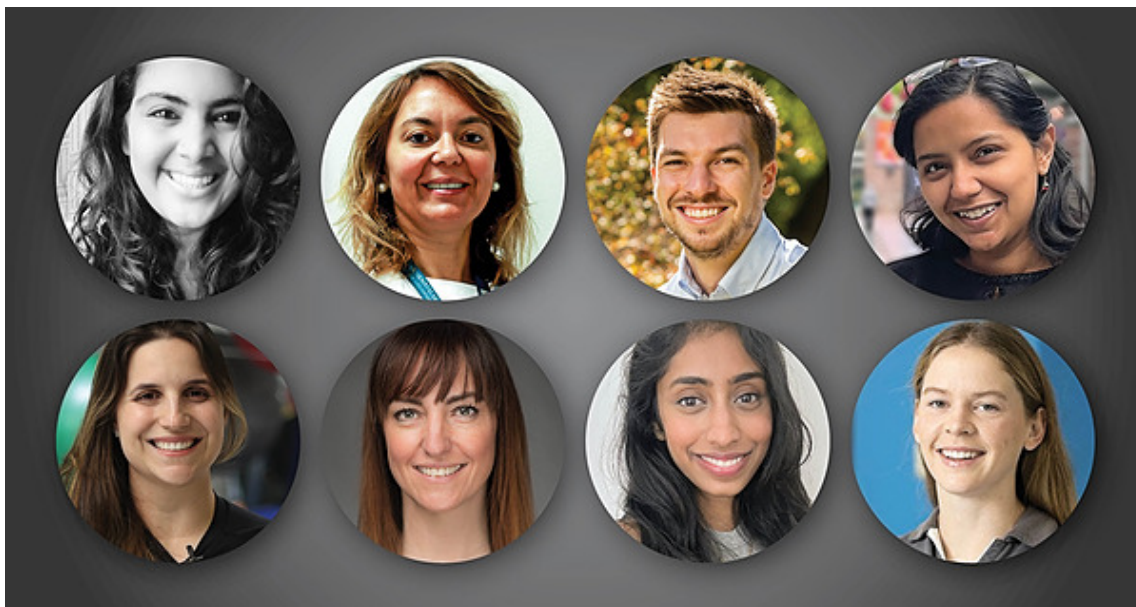
We'll email the report to you on 5 September, so look out for it in your inbox!



Announcing the 2024 SCI Research Collaboration Grant recipients

Each year, the Spinal Research Institute awards SCI Research Collaboration Grants to support attendance at the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) Annual Scientific Meeting. These grants are designed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and to build relationships between individuals, institutions and countries involved in spinal cord research. They also provide an opportunity to connect with institutions and organisations that support the grant recipient's area of research.

We are pleased to announce the eight recipients of the [SCI Research Collaboration Grant](#) for 2024. They will be travelling to Antwerp, Belgium to participate in the 63rd International Spinal Cord Society Annual Scientific Meeting (ISCoS 2024), from 22-25 September 2024.



*Top: Leena R Chaudhari, Maria Cunha, Ryan Dorrian, Kanishka Gambhir
Bottom: Natalia Padula, Angela Hanks Philippus, Srisankavi Sivasankar, Laura Stendell*

Leena R Chaudhari - India

Leena R Chaudhari is a PhD student and Junior Research Fellow at D.Y. Patil Education Society in Kolhapur. Her research focuses on developing tissue-engineered spinal cords, unlocking potential to heal damaged neural connections and restore function in people with SCI.

Maria Cunha - Portugal

Maria Ribeiro-Cunha, MD, is a PhD candidate and physiatrist specialising in SCI rehabilitation. Her research focuses on unravelling how gut dysbiosis impacts post-SCI outcomes, including neuroinflammation and functional recovery by investigating microbial composition changes.

Ryan Dorrian - Australia

Ryan Dorrian is a PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide's SCI Research Group. Focusing on secondary complications such as neuropathic pain, bladder impairment and cognitive dysfunction, he is researching a novel electrical stimulation device to improve outcomes post-SCI.

Kanishka Gambhir - India

Kanishka Gambhir is completing a masters of physiotherapy at the Institute of Rehabilitation Sciences, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi. Her research investigates the efficacy of inspiratory muscle training in enhancing sitting balance and respiratory function.

Natalia Padula - Brazil

Natalia Padula is a physiotherapist researching longitudinal care of adults and

elderly individuals with SCI. This includes physical activity, exercise participation, metabolic assessments, prevention of secondary complications, health education, and epidural stimulation.

Angela Hanks Philippus - US

Angela Hanks Philippus is a Research Project Specialist at the University of Minnesota managing research on traumatic injuries, including SCI. Angela is pursuing a doctorate on psychosocial factors that contribute to participation and positive outcomes after traumatic injury.

Srisankavi Sivasankar - Australia

Srisankavi Sivasankar is a PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide. Her research employs advanced behavioural assessments and analytical techniques to characterise secondary SCI complications, which her research aims to ameliorate through novel electrical stimulation therapy.

Laura Stendell - Australia

Laura Stendell is a PhD candidate at the University of Technology Sydney and she is also a Senior Physiotherapist working in neurological rehabilitation. Laura's research focuses on physical activity behaviours in middle-aged and older people with SCI.

The SRI will be at the International Spinal Cord Society Annual Scientific Meeting!

The 2024 International Spinal Cord Society Annual Scientific Meeting will be held in Antwerp, Belgium from 22 to 25 September. The SRI's Emma Peleg and Antonio Vecchio will be attending to showcase the SRI's programs and meet with the 2024 SCI Research Collaboration Grant recipients.

In addition, Antonio will be co-presenting a Workshop and an Instructional Course.

It is an exciting time for the SRI as we share the progress we are making and the impact of our programs with attendees at the largest gathering of spinal cord injury researchers in the world.

Second Online Networking Event for SCI researchers in 2024

The second SCoRH Online Networking Event for 2024 was held recently. It was attended by SCI researchers and clinicians across all career stages. Attendees in

the early stages of their careers were able to chat with more senior researchers, and this led to valuable connections and conversations.



The SRI began hosting these events in early 2023 to offer a forum where SCoRH members could connect with colleagues working in spinal cord injury research around the world in an informal setting. They have been well received and we look forward to hosting more of these events in future. We aim to vary the timing of the events so that researchers in a wide range of timezones can attend.

Building research engagement through consumer education

The SRI is committed to a paradigm shift in research, by engaging consumers in the research process to ensure that it meets the needs and priorities of the SCI community. Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge is crucial to this change and Antonio Vecchio, the SRI's Community and Consumer Engagement Manager, has developed educational sessions he is delivering to the SCI community. Antonio runs regular sessions at the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Unit, including launching monthly sessions for inpatients and their families on navigating SCI research, such as finding reliable sources of information and how to get involved in research.

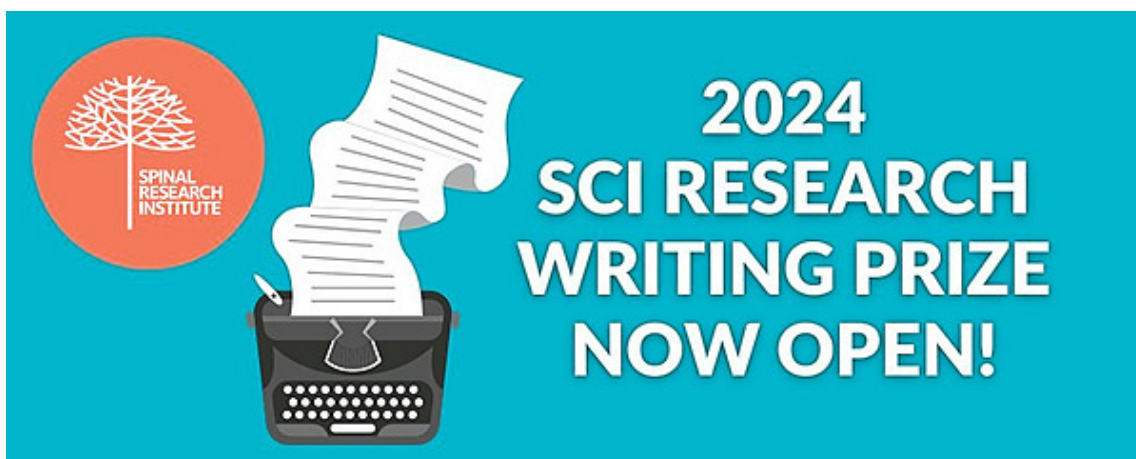
It is also important to recognise the essential role healthcare professionals play in the research landscape. Educating healthcare professionals to successfully navigate research can enable them to serve as a bridge between the research community and people with spinal injuries. As part of the Consumer Engagement Program, Antonio has also delivered workshops to the Leisure and Creative Therapies team at Royal Talbot, and delivered the first of ongoing professional development sessions for the Royal Talbot nursing staff.

This comprehensive approach underscores the importance of collaboration and education to advance SCI research outcomes and consumer engagement.

We gratefully acknowledge our major supporters of the Consumer Engagement Program: The Brian M. Davis Charitable Foundation and The Marian & EH Flack Trust.



Antonio Vecchio, second from left, with members of the Leisure and Creative Therapies team at Royal Talbot.



If you're a spinal cord injury researcher or clinician, we're asking you to write about your research in 800 words or less. This is a unique opportunity to present your research to a broad-ranging, non-scientific audience, and that's why we'd like you to use easy-to-understand language.

The SRI's Writing Prize program has developed from a pilot, first run in 2020, and is now run annually, developing into a comprehensive program that aims to engage researchers, support the development of research communication and knowledge translation skills, and champion spinal cord injury research to a local and international audience.

We're excited about the spinal cord injury research that is being conducted around the world, in developed and developing nations. We understand that submitting an entry for this prize may be challenging for researchers and clinicians whose first language is not English. That's why we're committed to

offering special consideration and support for these authors, particularly those from countries with low to very-low English language proficiency.

All shortlisted entries will be published in the fourth edition of *Why Research Matters*, and their authors will be offered a place in a workshop that explores research translation and impact. The first four editions of *Why Research Matters* and all the information you need in order to enter are at the link below.

Entries close Sunday 1 September.

[Find out more](#)

Thanking our supporters with a morning tea at Royal Talbot

Recently we were joined at Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre, the SRI offices, by members of the Rotary Club of Brunswick-Tullamarine for morning tea. Club President, Mr Peter Boudville, presented the SRI with a generous gift extending their multi-year support of the SRI. This continues our long-term relationship with the Club, which began in 2016. Kristine Hendry, SRI CEO, said, "On behalf of the SRI Board and team, I want to thank the Rotary Club of Brunswick-Tullamarine for its long standing support. Our relationship reflects our shared values and our mission to improve the health and quality of life of people with SCI."



Members of the Rotary Club of Brunswick-Tullamarine join members of the SRI, as Club President Peter Boudville (centre) presents the cheque.

Research improving colonoscopy outcomes for people with SCI

SRI Director Nick Morris OAM has been living with a spinal cord injury for over 30 years. In May this year, Nick underwent a colonoscopy. He says of his recent experience:

“Three years ago I had a failed colonoscopy procedure due to poor preparation. Neither my GP or the hospital where I had the procedure took into consideration my spinal cord injury (SCI). Today as a 52 year old I have just had a successful one due to an SCI specific preparation. It took three days prep at the Austin Hospital as an inpatient for a 15 minute procedure. The end result was a clean bill of colon health and peace of mind. What was terrific is that the [Victorian Spinal Cord Service](#) has developed a one page preparation summary. It showed the custom process that people with SCI can use to help ensure a successful scan. Here’s to living a healthy life as a person with SCI.”

While people with SCI have the same risk of colorectal cancer as the general population, [local research](#) showed they are less likely to undergo screening colonoscopy. Colonoscopy was then limited by poor bowel preparation and lower completion rates with a subsequent lower polyp detection rate. [More recent research](#) shows that multi-day inpatient colonoscopy bowel preparation for people with SCI is safe, well-tolerated and effective, and is an “important tool in improving colorectal cancer screening in the SCI population.”



“Here’s to living a healthy life as a person with SCI.”

Nick Morris OAM

SRI Director

This article describes the experience of one individual. This article is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for direct, personal, professional medical care and diagnosis. Please discuss your medical matters with your own doctor or health care provider.

Coming up

2024 International Spinal Cord Society Annual Scientific Meeting

22-25 September 2024 in Antwerp, Belgium

[More information](#)

Eurospine 2024

2-4 October 2024 in Vienna, Austria

[More information](#)

2024 Annual Scientific Meeting of the Australia and New Zealand Spinal Cord Society

27-29 November 2024 in Fremantle, Australia

[More information](#)

Are you seeking participants for your research study or clinical trial?

The SRI regularly receives requests to promote research to potential participants for research projects. We now have an [online form](#) where these requests can be submitted for consideration. Studies and trials currently seeking participants are below.

Can online delivery of a group music therapy intervention improve breathing, voice, mood and quality of life for people with quadriplegia?

This study was previously undertaken face-to-face, and researchers want to see if they can achieve the same results online.

Be one of 6 people to join this 6 week study!

- No musical experience or skill required
- Connect online with other people with quadriplegia
- Develop your breathing strength and control
- Have fun and sing your favourite songs

Up to 40% of people with SCI experience anxiety and depression and many are at risk for social isolation. Music therapy has been shown to improve mood and reduce anxiety and depression.

The therapeutic singing intervention that this study is testing was designed in collaboration with Tim McCallum, a quadriplegic professional singer.

If you are interested, please email Associate Professor Jeanette Tamplin:

jeanette.tamplin@unimelb.edu.au



International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) update

63rd International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) Annual Scientific Meeting, 22–25 September 2024

This September, The International Spinal Cord Society will welcome its guests through the ornate doors of the historical Flanders Meeting and Convention Center in Antwerp, Belgium.



Hosting a variety of lectures, presentations, debate panels, workshops and immersive instructional courses, this unique event plays a pivotal role in the annual calendar of SCI professionals worldwide.

Over the three days, renowned global speakers will be offering guests wisdom from all areas of spinal cord injury prevention, rehabilitation and management; supporting SCI professionals to further their career, develop their knowledge and apply this experience in a patient-focused manner.

- This event is open to members of ISCoS and non-members who work within the SCI community.
- Group Discounts are available to groups of 4+ Allied Health Professionals by contacting iscos@associationsltd.co.uk
- ISCoS is able to offer 33 [pre-reserved accessible rooms](#) across six hotels in Antwerp. For all other accommodation you can view our [Hotel Map](#).

Visit the [ISCoS 2024 website](#) to find out more about the ISCoS 2024 and to register your spot.



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Reading this because someone forwarded it to you? Subscribe below!

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The Spinal Research Institute is a not-for-profit organisation building research collaboration and consumer engagement to improve the lives of people with spinal cord injury.

We welcome donations to support our work throughout the year.

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We are registered with the Australian Charity and Not-for-profits Commission.



The Spinal Research Institute is proud to be supported by



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The Spinal Research Institute acknowledges
the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work,
the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation.
We pay our respects to Elders past and present.