WHY RESEARCH MATTERS: DEMYSTIFYING AND COMMUNICATING SCI RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

Academic publications can be inaccessible to a non-specialist audience due to journal subscription costs, the use of scientific language, article length, and writing style. In 2020, the Spinal Research Institute (SRI) developed the SCI Research Writing Prize and associated publication, 'Why Research Matters,' to present diverse research from around the world in easy-to-understand language.

METHOD

The Writing Prize asks SCI researchers and clinicians to write creatively about their research in a way that is suitable for a general audience. Entries must be written in easy-to-understand language. Since 2022, the SRI has offered special consideration to authors whose first language is not English, particularly those from countries with low to very-low proficiency. Winners have their piece published in 'Why Research Matters' and receive a place in a research translation and impact workshop, facilitated by Research Impact Academy.

RESULTS

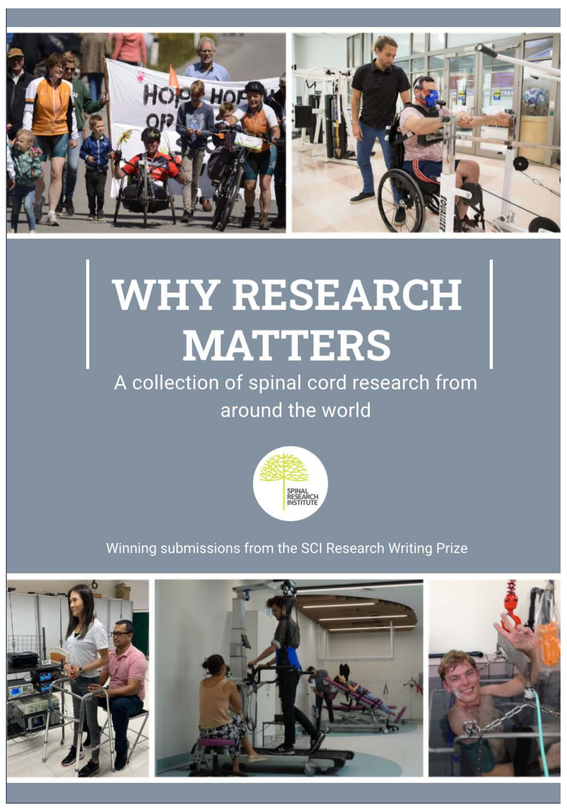
Would researchers enter the competition?
The Writing Prize has been undertaken since 2020, and the work of 44 SCI researchers has been featured across four editions of 'Why Research Matters.' The competition has an average of 11 published pieces annually.

Would community members read the publication?
In 2023, the social media campaign to publicise 'Why Research Matters' had over 17,000 views. The campaign launch email was opened by 362 individuals and there have been 1,519 events on the writing prize webpage in the past six months.

Would there be benefits we hadn't considered?
The SRI's social media platforms experienced growth, leading to improved brand recognition. Researchers from unrelated fields engaged with the authors. Authors from previous years engaged with the work of new authors.

CONCLUSION

'Why Research Matters' is a vehicle for research communication. Bringing research into the public domain supports advocacy efforts and improvements to health care policy and practice. Research communication makes research accessible and enables all stakeholders to engage in discussion, debate and decision making about the application of research outcomes. It puts research into the hands of the people who will benefit from its impact, people with SCI.



2020

12 authors
8 countries
2 authors from LMICs
4 authors men
8 authors women

2021

8 authors
5 countries
0 authors from LMICs
3 authors men
5 authors women

2022

13 authors
11 countries
5 authors from LMICs
2 authors men
11 authors women

2023

11 authors
6 countries
5 authors from LMICs
3 authors men
8 authors women

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The Spinal Research Institute's SCI Research Writing Prize and associated publication Why Research Matters were launched in 2020. The program is in its 5th year .

thesri.org/writing-prize

The Spinal Research Institute is an Australian registered charity building research collaboration and consumer engagement to improve the lives of people with spinal cord injury.

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