

# **ESCIF project on comprehensive spinal cord injury management: the issue of lifelong care and follow up**

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## Background

- Spinal cord injury (SCI) usually causes severe medical consequences
- People with SCI live with the constant threat of complications that can lower their quality of life
- This project followed on from previous reports and statements on centralisation and quality in rehabilitation
- Lifelong care and monitoring should be an integral part of comprehensive SCI management

Prevention is better than cure!

## Background

- Not all ESCIF member countries implement regular follow-ups for people with SCI
- Among those that do have a system, there is a fear of cutbacks due to the economic crisis
- Finland became a “test case” for the project

How to establish an efficient and cost-effective system of lifelong care and follow-up ?

## Aims of the study

- To describe the purposes of lifelong care
- To identify and describe the benefits of regular follow-up examinations
- To identify ideal components of a follow-up system i.e. which investigations, how frequent, where and by whom?
- To define problems of existing systems in the light of the current economic crisis
- To formulate a policy statement

## Methods

- Literature search
- Consultation with SCI medical professionals
- Analysis of current systems
- Discussions with SCI consumers

## Results

- The literature search yielded interesting observations but little hard evidence
- Consultations with SCI professionals indicated general agreement as to the benefits of follow-up but few unambiguous recommendations
- The recommendations of the working group are “consumer driven”

## Conclusions

- The purpose of lifelong care is to prevent adverse outcomes and complications
- It is cost-effective as it can reduce the need for expensive inpatient treatment, sick leave from work etc.
- Every ESCIF member country should devise a protocol for an overall system that takes account of the changing demographics of the SCI population
- For the individual, the components and frequency of follow-up must depend on an individual evaluation involving SCI professionals and the person with SCI

## Conclusions cont.

- The results of all investigations undertaken as part of follow-up should be interpreted by SCI professionals and members of the multi-speciality team attached to the spinal cord injury centre
- Countries facing geographical and infrastructural challenges should consider outreach services and the use of telemedicine