

SCI Rookie Book

Spinal cord injury basics for rookie supporters

Who's who
and how can they help my
person?



A note from Jenni...

I became a rookie supporter when my person was admitted to a Spinal Injury Unit (SIU) after a traumatic spinal injury. In the beginning, I felt like every time I turned around, another person was coming to talk to us about what they would be doing for and with her.

I soon realised, that just like it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a team to support a person with spinal cord injury.

This booklet may help you understand who is who and how they can help your person from arrival at hospital. You may already have knowledge of some of these roles from your everyday life, however this booklet lets you know what they do specifically for your person with a spinal cord injury.

There are three Spinal Injury Units (SIU) across NSW:

- Prince of Wales Hospital - Randwick
- Royal North Shore Hospital - St Leonard's
- Royal Rehab - Ryde

The job titles of employees in each of these SIUs may vary a little, however the roles and responsibilities are essentially the same.

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SCIA Acute Family Resource Coordinator



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AIN	Assistant in Nursing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AINs work as a member of the nursing team, assisting nurses and supporting patients in their activities of daily living. • For example, they may help your person with their hygiene needs and assist nurses to monitor their condition by taking blood pressure, temperature and respiration rates.
CCC	Clinical Care Coordinator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CCC assists your person to navigate through the health system from admission to discharge. The CCC assists with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ preventing delays and obstacles to your person's care ◦ preventing unnecessary interruptions in your person's care delivery ◦ involving all relevant staff in the planning of your person's care from admission to discharge.
Cleaner	Cleaner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An invaluable part of maintaining the hygiene of the ward.
CNC	Clinical Nurse Consultant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An important part of the CNC role is to provide support, education and training to you and your person. • They can assist your person in making decisions about their personal care. • Some of the areas that your person may require help with include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ skin care, bladder and bowel care, autonomic dysreflexia education, and sexuality and fertility functioning

CNC continued	<p>The CNC is able to work with your person to determine how much assistance and nursing related equipment they may require when they leave hospital.</p>
Dietitian	<p>Dietitian</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dietitian may conduct an initial nutrition assessment to determine your person's specific nutrition needs. • They may also provide dietary advice and education to your person and their family. • Nutrition plays an important role after spinal cord injury, as it can have a significant impact in several ways, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ weight loss or gain ◦ bowel function and routine ◦ fluid intake and catheter management ◦ skin and potential pressure injuries ◦ bone health ◦ swallowing ◦ confidence ◦ equipment.
Doctors	<p>Doctors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your person will be admitted to hospital under one of the specialist doctors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Trauma Team ◦ Neurosurgeon ◦ Orthopaedic Surgeon. • Once your person is stable, they will be managed by a Spinal Rehabilitation Specialist.



Doctors continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your person would expect to see them once a week.• Considering the complexity of spinal cord injuries, your person's specialist may work closely with other specialists, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Respiratory physician◦ Pain specialist◦ Urologist◦ Plastic surgeon◦ Psychiatrist.
EN	Enrolled Nurse <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ENs practice under the direction of a registered nurse (RN).• ENs can assist your person with:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ physical and emotional care◦ monitoring their care◦ administering medication◦ maintaining infection prevention and control◦ performing clinical assessments◦ contributing to care planning.
NUM	Nursing Unit Manager <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The NUM oversees the operation and management of the Spinal Cord Injury Unit.
Orthotist	Orthotist <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If it is required, an orthotist makes and fits splints for your person to facilitate greater function.• Splints may be required for:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ hands/wrists/arms/fingers/◦ legs/feet.



<p>OT</p>	<p>Occupational Therapist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Occupational Therapist will be working with your person to achieve independence in various areas of their daily life, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Personal Care (feeding, drinking, grooming, showering & dressing) ◦ Mobility e.g. manual wheelchair, power wheelchair, walking frame, crutches ◦ Home living (access, cooking, cleaning). ◦ Community living (shopping, banking, driving) ◦ Leisure activities ◦ Work and study options ◦ Education for your person and their family. • Occupational Therapists have specialist knowledge in wheelchairs, adaptive equipment, pressure care management, home modifications and technology to aid independence in your person's everyday life.
<p>Peer and Family Support</p>	<p>Peer and Family Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) Peer and Family Support team provide free, non-clinical, practical advice and lived experience of physical disability to help your person to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Regain their independence ◦ Make connections in your community ◦ Practice skills for everyday living ◦ Develop the knowledge they need for everyday living ◦ To feel supported and respected. • SCIA has a Family Peer Mentor who has lived experience of being a rookie supporter to their person who had SCI. They are able to draw on this experience to provide one-to-one support and practical advice to rookie supporters.



Physio

Physiotherapist

- The physiotherapy team offers specialised knowledge and skills aimed at optimising your person's physical capacity and independence.
- The role of physiotherapy will depend on your person's needs and may include respiratory management, strength, fitness and flexibility programs, functional task retraining, aquatic therapy and treatment of musculoskeletal conditions.
- On the acute spinal ward your person's physiotherapist will assess their lung function, strength and flexibility and implement a therapy program based on their needs.
- The physiotherapist will work closely with other members of the team to get your person up and moving as soon as possible. Once they are medically well enough, your person's physiotherapist will commence their rehabilitation program in the physiotherapy gym setting.
- All spinal cord injuries and people are different, therefore your person's physiotherapist will work closely with them to optimise their potential function and achieve their personal goals.
- Some of the physiotherapy sessions may also be held on the ward to look at various aspects of your person's function. This is to make their function part of their day to day living and help with the transition back to life at home.
- The physiotherapist will also work with your person to plan for leaving hospital. This will involve investigating options for ongoing exercise (home exercise program, equipment or ongoing services) to maintain and perhaps even further improve their function.



Psychologist and Psychiatrist

Psychologist and Psychiatrist

- A spinal cord injury is considered a traumatic event and is often life changing. It can affect your person physically, emotionally and socially. These challenges and difficulties can initially appear devastating as virtually all aspects of life is disrupted. At this time, your person may not know what to expect from their injury and may find it difficult to make sense of what has happened.
- Your person will be able to see a psychologist following their spinal cord injury who can work with them to address their individual psychological needs.
- These needs may be addressed by themselves or with their significant other or family. The psychologist may provide:
 - Assessments to address your person's beliefs about their sense of self and their future
 - Counselling relating to altered functioning
 - Stress management and coping skills
 - Pain management strategies
 - Neuropsychological assessment and referrals when traumatic brain injury accompanies a spinal cord injury.
 - The psychologist, psychiatrist and social worker work together as a psychosocial team.

RN

Registered Nurse

- Nurses will be involved with your person's care on a day-to-day basis. They will:
 - help them to adapt to a changed lifestyle in a safe environment
 - provide education and teach your person and their family new skills

**RN
continued**

- educate your person about their skin, bowel and bladder care and autonomic dysreflexia
- help your person and their family deal with any issues of grief and loss that they or the family may experience
- inform your person on how to prevent complications now and in the future
- help manage any pain
- administer medication.

Social Worker

Social Worker

- Spinal cord injury is a life changing event for both your person and their support network.
- Social Workers are here to support your person and their family by offering emotional and practical assistance, specifically related to:
 - psychosocial reactions to trauma
 - crisis intervention
 - grief and bereavement counselling
 - ongoing interpersonal counselling.
- Social Workers may assist with practical needs in the following areas:
 - Compensation and financial matters
 - Legal matters
 - Transport – Assist your person to apply for parking and transport subsidies
 - Insurance – Liaise with the relevant insurers such as icare, CTP, NDIS and My Aged Care
 - Accommodation
 - Provide information about temporary accommodation options near the hospital
 - Community - Connect you with community supports such as Spinal Outreach Services, Forward Ability Support and Spinal Cord Injuries Australia.

Speech Pathologist	Speech Pathologist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform assessments and provide treatment for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ swallowing ◦ motor speech ◦ voice ◦ cognitive and communication disorders that result from the SCI and/or co-occurring brain injuries.
Students	Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hospital your person may be in will most likely have students on their learning journey. This may include student doctors, nurses and allied health staff e.g. OTs, physios.
SPCC	Spinal Pressure Care Clinic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your person develops a pressure injury, this may be treated by nursing staff from the SPCC. • They can treat pressure injuries for people in hospital and in the community.
SSO or Wardsperson	Service Support Officer or Wardsperson May provide the following assistance when required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rolling in bed to reduce pressure injuries if required • hoisting in and out of bed and chairs if required • moving equipment on the ward and around the hospital • transport to procedures • check and restock equipment • essential hand to the nursing staff.
Surgical Dresser	Surgical Dresser May provide the following assistance when required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bowel routines for males • shaving for a procedure • catheterisation of male patients • suprapubic catheter changes for male and female patients.

Who can I talk to?

Can I get practical help, from people with lived experience of spinal cord injury?



You sure can. The recovery journey after a spinal cord injury is incredibly challenging, which is why SCIA's Peer and Family Support program is so critical. The Peer and Family Support team provide free, non-clinical, practical advice and [lived experience](#) of physical disability to help people with spinal cord injury and their support people to:

- Regain independence
- Make connections in the community
- Practice skills for everyday living
- Develop the knowledge needed for everyday living
- To feel supported and respected



Speak to SCIA Peer & Family Support on the ward



1800 819 775



info@scia.org.au

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