

CENTRE NEWS

There are plans afoot to refurbish a few areas within the NSIC.: the bathrooms within the wards and the Reception areas. These two schemes are both very exciting as these two areas will really benefit from some modernisation and when completed I am sure will make a big difference to you as patients.

We are currently working closely with our architects and when we have more definitive plans we will share them with you.

Volunteers wanted!

Could you help fundraise for the Stoke Mandeville Spinal Foundation? If you have any time to spare, either on an ad hoc or regular basis, we would love to hear from you. The Foundation has lots of ideas, but we need passionate people to help turn these into reality. You could help making a real difference to the quality of life of people with spinal cord injury.

For more information please contact:
Stoke Mandeville Spinal Foundation
NSIC, Stoke Mandeville Hospital
Aylesbury, HP21 8AL
T: 01296 31 6783
W: www.smsf.org.uk
E: info@smsf.org.uk

A big thank you

A very big thank you to DREAMS 'The Bed Experts' for kindly donating the new bed for the Spinal Independence Bungalow.

Getting to Know Our Staff:

Patient Support Officer Melissa Swinkels
The NSIC welcomed the new Patient Support Officer, Melissa Swinkels, in July 2013.

Melissa was a patient at the NSIC in 2000 after sustaining a C7 Spinal Cord Injury.

How can the Melissa help you?

By clarifying any medical jargon that you don't understand

By attending any goal-planning meetings or out-patient appointments with you as a neutral 'support buddy'

By explaining the rehabilitation process and policies within the centre

By providing mediation between you and the staff if you feel that you are not being heard or understood

By attending the weekly multi-disciplinary team meeting to represent you, ensuring that your views are taken into account

By feeding back any ideas or comments you might have to make on how to improve the systems within the centre (anonymously if you prefer)

By putting you in touch with others who have found themselves in similar life-changing situations

Or just by being someone to talk to who understands what you are going through!

Should you wish to contact her please email: melissa.swinkels@buckshealthcare.nhs.uk
Question Time with Melissa Swinkels

1. What is your favourite film?

I am not embarrassed to say that it has got to be Point Break!

2. What is the most adventurous holiday you have ever been on?

Travelling through Asia for 3 months. Nothing pre booked apart from the flights. Not quite knowing if it would be accessible and hoping for the best! This gave me so much more confidence, I knew there is always a way out of a tricky situation.

3. What is the best piece of travel advice you could give someone?

If you are not sure if your accommodation is fully adapted, bring a (waterproof) shower curtain. You can put this over your wheelchair so you can shower in your chair. Oh and a freewheel, a freewheel makes it so much easier to push over uneven paths!

4. What is your favourite quote?

Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.

~Mahatma Gandhi

Santa Visit

On December 20th Santa and his elves and fairy came to visit the NSIC.

They handed out presents to every patient and spread the Christmas cheer.

We would like to thank all the staff at the NSIC for their generous donations. It really put a smile on everyone's faces.



Fundraising:

This year 16 patients, 1 partner and some of the

NSIC staff took part in the annual Santa Push.

They pushed, cycled and walked between 1.5 and 5 miles! Everyone challenging themselves.

Patients were dressed as elf's, Santa's and reindeers. They raised approx £1000 for sports equipment and more money is coming in.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this event, it was a great success.

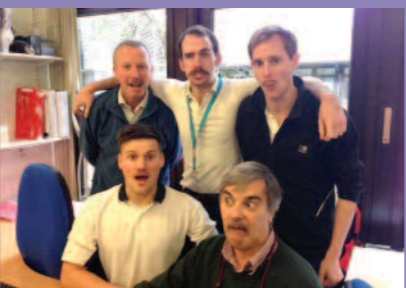
Fundraising:

Staff at Stoke Mandeville Hospital organised a 'share a plate, save a life' event to raise money for the Typhoon Haiyan Appeal last Thursday. Staff, patients and visitors were able to sample a range of authentic Filipino dishes and donate to the appeal. £2,505 was raised during the day and all money will be sent to the British Red Cross.



Some of the NSIC staff were growing moustaches for MOvermber!!! The cause is for men's health, testicular and prostate cancer and mental health awareness among men.

The 'NSIC wolfpack' as they were fondly named, consisted of: James Alexander, Ian Benson, Tom Barnes, Robin Plumridge and Godfrey Clements. They raised £410! Well done wolves!



CONGRATULATIONS

Naomi Bagwell on having a baby boy

Helen Thrussel on having a baby boy

Hilary Smith on having a baby boy

Susie Scorer and husband Daniel on having a baby boy

Sally Reffold on having a baby boy

Fran Ifould on having a baby girl

Alice Gale got married on Saturday 28th December

Congratulations to Sara O'Shea, the new ward sister on St Francis

Liz Cole, the interim matron

GOODBYES

Goodbye to Kara Hosking, Physio Therapist

Zoe Chessell, Assistant Psychologist

Thank you all for all your hard work over the years. You made a tremendous difference to all your patients. We wish you all the best in the future..

WELCOMES

Welcome Alice Kilvert, Assistant Psychologist

Welcome back Rachel Harrison who went to France for 6 months to study French

Welcome to all new nursing staff, from home and abroad

Welcome to the new senior management team

PLEASE LET US KNOW

A) If you would like to receive this Newsletter by email please enter your name and email address here and return this slip to the address below:-

Name Email @

B) If your details need amending please print them here and return the slip to the address below:-

C) If you no longer wish to receive future copies of this Newsletter please print your details here and return to the address below:-

RETURN TO: - Melissa Swinkels, Patient Support Officer, National Spinal Injuries Centre
Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Mandeville Road, Aylesbury, HP21 8AL

Or email melissa.swinkels@buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

SCI News is sponsored by **stewartslaw**

SCI News

SPRING 2014

Georgina Friend's Post Graduate Study in Therapeutic Recreation (TR) in North America

Four days after working at the Paralympics as Athletes Service Team Leader for the Wheelchair Rugby Competition, I flew out to Canada to start my Post Graduate studies in TR at Georgian College Ontario. The course was run with practical elements to all modules which gave me the chance to implement everything that had been taught into sessions and to see how TR could be initiated into a hospital setting.

As part of the course I visited a number of facilities around the Toronto area where TR is already being used as a fundamental therapy tool. The facilities I visited ranged from a Children's Rehabilitation Hospital, a Spinal Rehabilitation Hospital, a Psychiatric Rehabilitation Hospital, a Psychiatric Day Programme, a Youth Centre and a few Long Term Care Homes.

TR can be used in any facility to help promote wellness and leisure. The ethos behind TR is to work within the Multi-Disciplinary Team to achieve the patients' set goals and outcomes. TR is very patient-centred and looks at personal interests to use as the tool to achieve these same outcomes. It has been proven that leisure interest incorporated into a patients' rehabilitation helps people to achieve their other therapy goals as well as gaining independence for the future.

My internship was a 15 week placement at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta Georgia working with the Adolescent team. The Shepherd Center have 35 TR staff including six specialists to work with Arts, Sports, Outdoor pursuits, Aquatics, Music and Horticulture.

The Shepherd Center's TR is very well resourced, consequently their facilities are second to none. They have a 25m swimming pool with a deep end for scuba diving, a basketball court on site, a fully inclusive gym and a 100m track.

I had a caseload of 8-10 patients. Knowing their personal leisure interests helped me to

incorporate the TR support in the wider context of their Physiotherapy (PT) and their Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments that are set each week. Each week there are three evening outings that patients can attend, such as meals out, grocery shopping, mall outings, aquarium outings, movie outings, baseball games etc. Ex-patients are also catered for through a number of weekend and short camps. During my placement I was included in the leadership team of some of these:-

1) A water ski clinic which they run three times a year.

2) An Adventure Skills Workshop (ASW) camp which included various outdoor adventure programmes from water skiing to zip wire. Other events include camping trips with fishing, shooting and a deep sea fishing trip out of Florida.

Each Friday the adolescent team have 'Fun Friday' which entails the PT, OT and TR staff all working together on an activity at the Shepherd Center or out in the community. Whilst I was there we visited a park and did hand-cycling, visited an Aquarium, visited CNN and went on a Ferris wheel looking over Atlanta, went to the movies, bowling, fitness session and games. The Shepherd Center produced a fashion show which included current and former patients and staff whilst I was on placement.

The Shepherd Center every month put on a trip to the Airport for patients to experience what it would be like to go through security and board a plane. Another outing that the Shepherd Center facilitates is Equine outings. The Shepherd Center offer advice on spinal cord injury to the schools once the young people have returned home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to Stewarts Law, the Girdlers Trust, CSP and the NSIC for helping fund my post graduate studies in TR in North America during the past year.

I am convinced that NSIC's approach to Rehabilitation for its SCI patients could benefit from the concept of RT and its patient focused approach.

Georgina Friend

Study exploring the benefit of probiotic

New research study exploring the benefit of probiotic in people with spinal injury

Researchers at the National Spinal Injuries Centre (NSIC) in Stoke Mandeville Hospital, a research partner of the Centre of Gastroenterology and Clinical Nutrition at University College London, have found that a daily commercial probiotic drink (containing Lactobacillus casei Shirota: Yakult Light) significantly reduces incidence of antibiotic-associated diarrhoea in spinal injury patients.



The study, published on 18th September 2013 in the peer-reviewed British Journal of Nutrition, was funded by the Healthcare Infection Society and by Yakult UK Limited, who also provided the Yakult Light drinks.

Spinal injury patients are very prone to diarrhoea when on antibiotics. Antibiotics can disturb the ecosystem of micro-organisms normally present in the digestive system, allowing bacteria such as Clostridium difficile to overwhelm the gut.

The full paper is available on <http://www.nutrition-society.org/publications/nutrition-society-journals/british-journal-of-nutrition/press-releases> for a limited period.

Samford Wong

Psychology Celebrates 25 years

Professor Paul Kennedy was appointed in June 1988 as Principal Clinical Psychologist to establish a psychology service at the NSIC, his first office being based on St Joseph's ward. Over the years the service has gone from strength to strength, providing psychological assessment, treatment and support to help people manage the emotional challenges they face as they learn to cope with, and adjust to, living with a spinal cord injury.

Various Clinical Psychologists, Assistant Psychologists, Trainees and post-graduate

students have worked in the team through the years, with the current team being in post as



follows: Prof Paul Kennedy since 1988, Linda Hall (Secretary/Administrator) since 1996, Dr Jane Duff since 1997, Dr Imogen Cotter since 2004, Dr Zoë Chevalier since 2006, Dr Liz Pounds-Cornish since 2007 and Dr Kevin Jones, who joined the team early last year (all pictured). Also working with us but not pictured are Sarah Standish, Family Counsellor, and Alice Kilvert, Assistant Psychologist who both joined this year.

The Department of Clinical Psychology celebrated its 25 year anniversary by holding an informal get-together in early autumn, along with partners and children.

Congratulations to Sue and Ruth



Congratulations to Ruth Peachment and Sue Lawrences who won the Scientific Committee poster prize at the recent MASCIIP Conference with their lymphoedema poster.

Fashion show

In all honesty, when I was first approached to take part in the fashion show, I was reluctant at best. I had only a few weeks previously sustained a massive



trauma which had left me paraplegic, something that I was still coming to terms with. How much of my identity had I tied up in being able to run fast, jump, kick and be 'able-bodied'? I had spent the past 3 years living abroad training martial arts to gain more self-assuredness and become more capable. Now I wasn't sure I was ready to put myself in the full focus of the public eye, with so much of what I saw as what I had lost being apparent. Thus, to begin with, my answer was a 'maybe'.

A week later I was asked a second time, fortuitously I was feeling upbeat. So I gave my regular pre-

injury answer when asked to take part in things that pushed me out of my comfort zone, an emphatic 'yes'. The day of the fashion show dawned, I had to get myself out of bed at 6am to prepare to depart he

The models were split into two groups, us patients together with some regular models modelling certain shops clothing, and a separate group of regular models who were modelling different clothes. The other group began proceedings; in the staging area beforehand I could tell they were going to go out with a bang. Their energy was building as they got pumped up to perform. It was impossible not to get swept up in their enthusiasm! They danced out and we followed to watch them perform choreographed dance routines and model their clothes.

I felt my earlier misgivings begin to melt away in the positive atmosphere. Thus when it was our turn to model, I felt more excited

hospital at 8am. Reluctance pulsed through me, it would be so much easier to tell a nurse I was sick, no one would challenge it, I was a patient in hospital after all. But did I want to be that guy? Definitely not! I mentally chastised myself for being a wimp, and promptly got out of bed to get ready to go.

We left the hospital at around 9am and speedily made our way to the venue, Friars Square in Aylesbury, where I met up with the other patients (Issy, Harriet, Irene and Jason) who were taking part as well as the regular models. We each tried on the clothing we would be modelling and there was a lot of light-hearted banter.

ISCoS

The 52nd Annual Scientific Meeting of the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) was held 28 - 30 October 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey.

Stoke Mandeville contributed several oral and poster presentations and workshops to the scientific programme. One of them, Samford Wong's probiotic study paper, presented by Dr Ali Jamous, won second prize for best oral presentation at the meeting. Congratulations to both of them!

Stoke Mandeville staff are also active members of the ISCoS Council and several Committees. Debbie Green was mentioned by name at the AGM and acknowledged for her contribution to the ISCoS Education Committee and the International Network of SCI Nurses. Well done, Debbie!

The 53rd Annual Scientific meeting of ISCoS will take place in Maastricht, The Netherlands, 2 - 4 September 2014. Abstract submission is now open on the ISCoS 2014 website.



George Pas

In July 2011 I was involved in an RTC, car vs. Motorcycle and to completely surprise you all, the motorcycle (and rider) lost the battle. I had sustained a number of injuries, including a complete SCI. After eight weeks I was transferred to a spinal unit but due to the metal in my arms my physio was reluctant to let me do anything as a precaution. Finally after thirteen weeks of doing nothing I was discharged. I spent the next two years teaching myself how to do everything from dressing to transfers, basic wheelchair skills to mastering curbs and steps and it had been a major struggle I can assure you.

In October 2013 after a referral by my GP, I was admitted for a period of four weeks to the NSIC to help me, effectively to start my rehab some two and a half years after my accident which had left me paralysed. I learnt more in the first day than I had in the entire thirteen weeks at my previous unit.

I am not going to whittle on and on about how difficult it has been forgetting and relearning, but instead I want to tell you from someone who is over two years in a wheelchair how I have found the NSIC and things that stand out. Staff here knows their stuff, if work with them you will fly through rehab. You can ask any question and they will answer them. Put your complete trust in them as they will not let you fall. There is no one at the NSIC who will be patronising you, letting

George Pas

Yes – I can travel the World

Some years ago I was a contributor to a DVD that Paul Kennedy made to help newly injured people see there is life after spinal cord injury. At the end I commented that I would like to go travelling – well this year that became reality!

In April 2013 I set off on my adventure, starting in Kochi, S. India where I joined the Lord Nelson, a tall ship owned by the Jubilee Sailing Trust. The ship is sailing around the world – I joined for the passage from India to Singapore. We were supposed to sail firstly to Sri Lanka and then head due east to Phuket in Thailand. However there was a tropical storm in the middle of the Bay of Bengal, so we sailed south to avoid it. We crossed the equator along with the traditional



crossing the line ceremony featuring King Neptune and his court!

We didn't make it to Thailand, but went instead to Langkawi in Malaysia, a beautiful collection of islands. After 2 nights there we sailed down to Singapore, skilfully avoiding any pirates in the Malacca straits! Singapore is an interesting mix of old and new. The most fantastic underground system that is fully wheelchair friendly – we could certainly learn a few things from them.

I left the ship in Singapore and flew on to Australia, and spent 3 weeks visiting Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney travelling between the cities by train and staying with friends and family.

Then I flew on to New Zealand where I was joined by a friend and we travelled around both islands, seeing the sights, and enjoying wonderful food – especially the fish. It was winter in New Zealand, which meant it was cold, but we had beautiful days with bright blue skies and sunshine. We saw spectacular countryside, and found interesting roads to drive along – steering round hairpin bends can be quite challenging when you are using hand controls!

Accommodation was not difficult to find – there

you know what an inspiration you are because they do not need to! All of the positivity comes from the patients telling each other how well they are doing as they notice individuals improve. "You do that well mate, you weren't doing that last week, fair play bud!" is just one comment I heard while going to the cafe. The proof of the positive energy that this place holds in abundance was clear to me when I watched three "wheelies" (an affectionate term for the wheelchair users), who were all of twenty years old if that. Smiling, and challenging each other to balance marathons; playing sports together in a large group of patients and talking freely about things related to their rehab no matter how personal, and laughing and joking while comparing stories about it. The fact that they felt relaxed enough to do this is, in my mind, testament to how relaxed a feel this place has.

I feel that I have benefited beyond words from the expertise of the staff but also from the other patients here who are more than happy to show you how to do something you are struggling with. I am also thankful for the chance to have met and spent time with such amazing people who by sharing their positivity with each other have helped those who have been struggling. NSIC, an amazing place to rehabilitate, containing amazing staff, facilities and most importantly of all... amazing patients.

George Pas

Sports Fest – Run by GB Paralympics

We took 7 current in patients to Worcester University to take part in the GB Paralympic Sports Fest. This consisted of trying various different sports from Boccia, Table Tennis, Basketball, Rowing, Handcycling, Rugby, Shooting etc.

The patients we took had shown potential in Sports during their rehab sessions. Each patient spent from 9.30am – 2pm trying various sports, some that they had done with us during sessions at Stoke Mandeville and other sports that we hadn't done. Some talked with coaches and athletes of certain sports to gain a better understanding of the sport at elite level.

This day was to give patients an insight into various sports all in one day as well as giving them information into elite sport and what it takes to get there. Each patient found a sport that they wanted to pursue on discharge which included Fencing, Track Racing, and Tennis & Archery.

A great day was had by all and a couple of the patients



are motels everywhere and the majority of them have provision for wheelchair users. We didn't even have to book it in advance, we made our plans as we went along.

We left New Zealand on 30 July returning home via Vancouver. I then had a few weeks to enjoy the English summer, having missed the heatwave, before I went back to my job with Irwin Mitchell at beginning of September. I feel refreshed and rejuvenated. I encourage everyone to go out and follow your dreams.

If you want to ask me any questions about this trip or my experiences of travel then please email me at anne.luttman-johnson@irwinmitchell.com or stop me if you see me around the hospital.

Anne Luttman-Johnson

have got a choice of sports to follow as they have shown potential in a few sports..... Watch this space Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020.

This is what the patients had to say about the day:

"It's easy to presume that sports are less accessible to the disabled, and whilst it's true that many are not yet adapted for wheelchair users, Sports Fest in Worcester showed us that many are still available and that Paralympic sport in the UK is thriving."

"From athletics to Archery, rugby to rowing, everyone found a new niche taking advantage of advice from the Paralympic coaches on hand."

"Although Stoke Mandeville offers multiple team sports, sports fest was an opportunity to sample more individual pursuits such as racing, shooting and sailing."

"Since Sports Fest we've been inspired to join sports clubs such as Halton Tennis Club and Disability Target Shooting GB. Whether as just a new hobby or the start of a sporting career, Sports Fest served as a fantastic springboard into the world of disability sport."

My Space Galactic Adventure with Virgin Galactic through Regain

I was the very lucky person who won this incredible auction bid at the Regain Annual Luncheon held at Lords in September. I had recently finished reading Richard Branson's autobiography and was fascinated by him. The prize was for two people but unfortunately despite my husband's best efforts to join me at such short notice he could not due to work commitments. So a dear friend Cathie joined me, I don't know who was more excited or enjoyed it more. We experienced something that money simply can't buy.

After a ten hour Virgin Atlantic flight where neither of us slept a wink as we were giddy with excitement - an evening cocktail reception at a very trendy Beverly Hills hotel on the Tuesday evening was our starting point.

Within half an hour of arriving at our hotel on the Avenue of the Stars we jumped in a cab to arrive at the Hotel 'Mr C' to embark on the first stage of the adventure. We had just entered one of the, if not 'the' most exclusive club in the world. The Virgin Galactic Astronaut Club!

On Wednesday 25th September we had an early start to board our coach to the Mojave Desert for what was to be the most amazing day.



The sun was rising over the desert and the anticipation of the day ahead filled us with excitement as we arrived at the headquarters of Virgin Galactic. It was then that the realisation of why we were here was sitting on the tarmac in front of an enormous airline hanger – WhiteKnightTwo and SpaceShipTwo. The incredible feat of engineering excellence that would one day, very soon, transport civilians into space. The ride of a lifetime, if there ever was one. A commercial

airline into space! Our day was filled with more information than we could ever have imagined. We were so privileged to have the opportunity to have a day with the Virgin Galactic employees who shared their wealth of knowledge in the most eloquent and simplistic manner.

Richard Branson was quite simply surrounded himself with the most amazing team of normal, intelligent and passionate individuals from across the world. Each and every one of those who spoke to us during this incredible day, showed an enthusiasm that didn't compare to anything we'd experienced before!

The icing on the cake was a party that evening at the California Space Station. One word - Endeavour!

We partied the night away with the myriad of future astronauts and their guests under one of NASA's most famous space ships. It was quite simply the most surreal and exciting day. We doubt that we'll ever experience anything quite like it again.

The question that we asked ourselves after this remarkable couple of days in LA: "Would we ever consider flying into space?"

The answer: Yes! we can't think of anyone better to take that leap into the unknown with than Richard Branson's amazing team at Virgin Galactic. We will be dining out on this story for a long time!

Thank you Richard & Regain for such an amazing experience.

Clare Park (Speech and Language Therapist at Stoke Mandeville Hospital) and *Cathie George*

Michelle Donald Psychosexual Therapist (PST)

1: What were your original motivations for wanting to become a PST therapist - how far have those motivations been fulfilled?

I became spinally injured in 1996 in a motorbike accident, which left me paralysed from my waist at T12. It was in the spinal centre that I became aware of how much people were asking about relationship and sexual issues so early after their accident, I was one of them, I went home with an indwelling catheter in, feeling very unsexy. It took us a long time to manage the adjustments and apart from the psychologist at the spinal centre (an able bodied man) we felt we had no one we could talk to! I felt the staff had more important things to do than talk to me about my relationship and sexual worries. I was scared I may embarrass them,



none of the staff had sex in the title so it felt a bit of a taboo subject!

With this in mind I set out to find out how I could fill that gap. With the help, guidance and support of my colleagues at Relate Lancashire I trained and gained my diploma in relationship counselling, then I embarked on my Post Graduate Diploma in Psychosexual Therapy and most recently I have become an Accredited member of the College of Sex and Relationship Therapists.

2: Where and who do you work with?

My client group consists of individuals and their partners struggling with various sexual issues affecting their relationships, regardless of ability or disability.

In addition to working at Stoke Mandeville National Spinal injuries Centre, Southport Spinal centre and Stanmore I work with private clients, clients from Warrington Disability Partnership (WDP) and BUPA. My expertise lies in the areas of sexual issues related to spinal cord injury and the relationship issues that a SCI may bring with it.

I feel it is necessary to address the issue of how important sexuality is after a spinal cord injury, in that this aspect of the relationship shared by a couple, is

African bike ride for Regain

There are some decisions you make that are a result of a very clear feeling that it is the right thing to do. Saying yes to this year's Regain bike ride to South Africa was definitely one of those. Regain is a charity that supports people who are tetraplegic as a result of a sporting accident, or, in some circumstances for people who are tetraplegic to get involved in sport. This year we had 4 tetraplegic hand cyclists, all of whom exhibited guts, determination and commitment in some very challenging conditions. November is a great time to visit South Africa, we had average temperatures of 25-30 degrees, the ride was a challenging 77km average per day with many "undulations" our leader Henk's favourite word, and on one day a relentless head wind. The hand cyclists need to have trained, be familiar with the hand cycles, and ready to spend up to 9 hours "in the saddle". Hand cycles can be borrowed from Regain and are available for the run up to the event for training. It is a challenge both for the hand cyclists and other riders.

We flew into Cape Town and transferred to the Karoo 1 Hotel at De Doorns / Touwsriver. From there we had 5 days of



continuous cycling, staying in comfortable hotels or lodges. Each evening we would meet at a local restaurant or the Hotel for the evening meal, share tales and finally get to bed for the following day's obligatory 7am start. Our Route took us to Montague, Barrydale, Malgas, Arniston

and Cape Agulhas, the southern most tip of Africa where the Oceans meet. We transferred to Cape Town on Friday morning and had 2 wonderful days



exploring this beautiful city before flying home on Saturday evening. Action for Charity who organise these Bike rides once again did a magnificent job. Sourcing local guides and cycling companies to make the process smooth enables all participants to concentrate on enjoying the "challenge". Daytrippers, the bike company had never worked with a mixed group of handcycles and upright bikes, but nothing was too difficult to give everyone a great experience in this welcoming country.

The news of Nelson Mandela's death on December 5th made this trip all the more special for me, and a privilege to have experienced a small part of the incredible history of the country. Moray, Kylie, John and Jonathan all had their challenges, Kylie's mainly coming once the ride had finished! (An unplanned transfer across a plank on choppy seas between 2 boats returning from Robben Island). To share time and ride with them was a highlight for me, and seeing what they achieved that week puts what we do every day in specialist spinal units into context. Please contact me if you want more information, or to find out more detail on the logistics of travel, cycling, accommodation or Regain. The next trip will be in Jordan 28th March to 4th April 2015, start your planning now!

Claire Gury

often neglected, with the focus being on the physical dysfunction. I am becoming more involved in encouraging spinal centres to help incorporate ideas for change and presenting this information to all the staff to allow them to think about what is achievable within the short space of time that patients are in spinal centres and how sexual rehabilitation can be effectively integrated during that period.

Myself and a colleague who works within oncology created I-Said, (Informing on Sexuality After Illness and Disability) a company delivering training around sexuality and relationships, illness, disability, and carer support to relevant groups and institutions nationwide. Something which both of us believe is hugely ignored and is difficult for individual staff to know how to work with.

I work as a volunteer with SHADA the sexual health and disability alliance as well as helping SPOKZ a disability counselling service with their on line forum.

For more information contact Michelle :-
Email: michelledonald@gofast.co.uk

Telephone: 07775 927 533

Training Website: www.i-said.co.uk

Michelle Donald