This booklet is for patients. The Patient Education Department runs a series of learning sessions that will equip you with the knowledge to be able to manage your spinal cord injury.

The aim of this booklet is to give you details of the programme and learning objectives of each session.
INTRODUCTION
(Including Goal Planning)

This session gives a general introduction to the Patient Education Room and the Patient Education Programme.

The Programme

- How knowledge and understanding of SCI complements the rehabilitation process.
- The normality of the thoughts, feelings and stresses you might experience following your injury.
- How gaining information from this programme can prepare you for your life after leaving hospital.
- How the Goal Planning process works.

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Understand the relevance of the programme.
- Understand how Patient Education can support you and your family.
- Have had a chance to meet the rest of the group.
- Understand the Goal Planning process and your part in it.
UNDERSTANDING SPINAL CORD INJURY

The Programme

- What is the spinal cord?
- Anatomy of the spine and spinal cord.
- Function of the spinal cord and nervous systems.
- What are the likely consequences of damage at different levels of injury?

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Be able to define the term ‘spinal cord’
- Understand the anatomy and function of the spinal cord.
- Understand the terminology relating to the SCI which in turn allows for an understanding of your injury.
- Understand what someone means when they talk about the central nervous system and autonomic nervous system.
- Understand the term ‘Autonomic Dysreflexia’ and how to recognise the symptoms.

Levels of Injury and Extent of Paralysis

- C4 injury (quadruplegia)
- C6 injury (quadruplegia)
- T6 injury (paraplegia)
- L1 injury (paraplegia)

Cervical (neck)
Thoracic (upper back)
Lumbar (lower back)
Sacral
Coccygeal
BLADDER MANAGEMENT

The Programme

- Why do we need to manage the bladder?
- Bladder control prior to SCI.
- Bladder control after SCI.
- Methods of managing your bladder.
- Deciding what method to use.
- Complications and what to do about them: follow up.

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Know why and when your bladder needs to be managed.
- Know what methods are available and why they are chosen.
- Understand more about the type of catheters, sheaths etc available.
- Know who to problem solve bladder problems.
CARE OF THE SKIN

The Programme

- What is a pressure ulcer?
- What causes pressure ulcers?
- Short and long term complications of pressure ulcers.
- Discussion of specific problem areas – time for questions.

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Know what a pressure ulcer is.
- How a pressure ulcer can be prevented.
- What the early signs of pressure ulcer development are.
PAIN MANAGEMENT

The Programme

- What is pain and how it works.
- Understanding the different types of pain that can be experienced after SCI.
- Pain management; drug treatments and other strategies.

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Understand more about how pain works.
- Have a greater awareness of strategies to manage pain.
- Have an opportunity, if you wish, to discuss ways in which you can manage pain.
- Know where to get help and advice about individual difficulties with pain.
Support After Spinal Cord Injury

The Programme

- Short presentations from four of the spinal charities about how they can support you during rehab and after discharge from the NSIC.
- Group discussion to explore potential legal issues faced by patients to include, but not limited to, the following:
  a) Employment issues
  b) Enforcing policies of insurance
  c) The use of Power of Attorney
  d) Claiming compensation
  e) Complex welfare benefits
  f) Disability discrimination
- Examine the relevant law applicable to these issues.
- Discuss the role of the lawyer within the discharge process.
- Have an opportunity to discuss legal issues with experienced lawyers.

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of this session you should:

- Have an awareness of the role of the different charities.
- Know how to get in touch with them.
- Have had the opportunity to discuss relevant legal issues with an experienced lawyer.
- Have a basic understanding of the relevant law.
- Have explored ways of dealing with the legal issues and identified a plan of action where required.
NUTRITION

The Programme:

- What’s a healthy diet?
- Healthy bones, skin & heart.
- Energy balance.
- Dietary fibre for healthy bowels.
- Reading labels.
- Making food choices.

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Know what food groups make up a balanced diet and how much of each food group to eat.
- Understand how dietary needs are altered following spinal cord injury.
- Know what foods to eat to maintain healthy bones and skin and a healthy weight.
- Know how to change the fat in your diet to reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke.
- Understand how to include more fibre in your diet for bowel health.
- Know how to read food labels.
- Understand how to make healthy food choices.
COPING WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY

The Programme

❖ Consider sources of stress and how to manage them.
❖ Recognise the normality of individual reactions.
❖ What influences stress?
❖ Breaking down stress.
❖ Problem solving.

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

❖ Understand that this is variability in stress.
❖ Understand how appraising a situation as a threat or challenge can alter your reaction to it.
❖ Understand what helps someone cope.
❖ Have had a chance to discuss stressful situations that may arise as a result of your SCI and develop solutions to these problems.
The Programme

- Group discussion to establish current knowledge level.
- Procedure for seating provision.
- Role of wheelchair service.
- Renewal of equipment after discharge.
- Will I get help with the cost of a wheelchair?
- Advice on travelling (car, rail, sea and air) and insurance.

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Understand wheelchair and cushion provision from admission to discharge and thereafter.
- Know what type of cushion you have.
- Know what wheelchairs are available and the cost of them.
- Understand the grants/vouchers available that will help you pay for your wheelchair.
- Appreciate the difficulties but possibilities of travel.
BOWEL MANAGEMENT

The Programme

- Implications of the spinal cord injury for bowel function.
- What is Bowel Management?
- Why learn about Bowel Management?
- When to manage your bowels.
- Possible problems of not managing bowels.
- When and how to seek help?

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Understand the main functions of large bowel in health.
- Understand major impacts of spinal cord injury on bowel function.
- Know what the aims of bowel management are.
- Be aware of the interventions that can be used to manage the bowel.
- Know how to avoid and manage constipation.
- Know when and how to seek medical advice for bowel problems.
TALK WITH EX PATIENTS

A chance for you to talk to former patients about their life experiences of managing and living with a spinal cord injury.

This is a discussion based group session and is your chance to ask questions about anything.

You may wish to ask questions such as:

- What is it like being at home?
- How did you set and achieve your goals?
- What are the issues relating to work?
- What changed most when you went home?
- What has stayed the same?
- This is also your chance to explore doubts, fears, wishes and hopes.
SEXUALITY AND FERTILITY

The Programme

- Why is there sexual dysfunction following SCI?
- What is available to aid sexual function?
- What are the emotional issues surrounding sexuality?
- How can I deal with them?
- Will I be able to date again?
- Can I have children?

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Understand your body’s sexual function following SCI and how it can be improved.
- Understand the emotional issues surrounding sexuality and dating following SCI.
- Understand what fertility treatment is available should you need it.
FITNESS

The Programme

- Implications of spinal cord injury on weight changes.
- Secondary health problems associated with weight gain.
- Impact of weight gain on function.
- Benefits of exercise.
- What sports are available following spinal cord injury.
- Information on how to access sports and exercise post spinal cord injury.

What am I going to learn from this:

By the end of the session you should:

- Increase in knowledge why there are significant weight changes post spinal cord injury.
- Understand the secondary health problems and the impact of weight gain on function post spinal cord injury.
- Understand the benefits of exercise and the preparation and precautions that need to be undertaken prior to exercising.
- Increased awareness of government initiatives and charities that assist in individuals participating in sports/exercise post spinal cord injury.
- Increase knowledge of sports/activities available to a large variety of individuals with spinal cord injury.
PROBLEM SOLVING AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

The Programme

- Identifying possible problems that people with spinal cord injury may face.
- Breaking down problems.
- Generating possible solutions.
- Discussing ideas in an open group.
- Choosing strategies to deal with problems.
- Social support and coping.

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Have had the opportunity to discuss possible situations/problems people with spinal cord injury may encounter in their everyday life.
- Explored possible ways of dealing with problems and possible solutions.
- Understand the various points of view and ways of dealing with situations.
- Understand the importance of social support and coping.
OUTPATIENT SUPPORT
AFTER LEAVING HOSPITAL

The Programme

- Introduction of the SPOP (Spinal Outpatients Team) multidisciplinary team.
- Transport to SPOP.
- The role of the peripatetic team, home visiting, community staff, GP and district nurse.
- Supply of equipment.
- Information on telephone help.
- Question and answer session/troubleshooting the previous clinical talks.

What am I going to learn from this?

By the end of the session you should:

- Be aware of the multidisciplinary team in SPOP.
- Understand what the service provides.
- Know how to access SPOP for information and advice.