

## **REPORT ON NEURAM NEURO-REHABILITATION (SPINAL CORD INJURY) CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP: 14- 17 May 2018**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of NEURAM (**NEUR**orehabilitation **Action(M**auritius) 2018 conference was to promote scientific exchanges between the Mauritian clinicians and Expatriate Counterparts. It was preceded by a two-day workshop that provided 'hands on' training on the management of spinal cord injury.

Each year 500 people suffer serious injuries as a result of road traffic, mostly motorcycle accidents. They are treated in hospitals with limited infrastructure and resources to care for patients with serious neurological disability.

Our intention is to address the deficiencies that we have observed, in public and private hospitals, so as to optimize the management of preventable conditions such as pressure ulcers, bowel, bladder and respiratory complications that follow a spinal cord injury.

When people experience a life-changing injury in Mauritius, they may have surgical intervention but they are often discharged from hospital with little or no advice on how to manage their skin, bladder or bowels.

Many spinal cord injury sufferers remain bed bound, feeling isolated and abandoned.

There is little support to reintegrate these people back into society.

Many public places lack the disabled access required to allow them to feel welcome in their own community.

This leads to a cycle of patients being ostracized leading to complete disconnect from any available supportive networks.

### **About NEURAM FOUNDATION (NEURorehabilitation Action(Mauritius)**

NEURAM considers that nobody should be left to suffer preventable complications from a neurologic or spinal cord condition if adequate neuro-rehabilitative services were available.

We are a non-profit organization (NGO) aiming to offer Mauritius a caring, empathetic, patient-centred approach in neurological injury.

We owe it to the people of Mauritius to show we can provide an answer to those who are most in need.

We believe in choice, dignity, independence, empowerment, and we stand for the undeniable fact that disabled rights are human rights.



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NEURAM promotes the concept of holistic care from the day of injury to return home and beyond.

We want to encourage clinical involvement in the acute care, making sure that all aspects are covered: management of acute and chronic conditions post neurologic injury including but not limited to psychological well-being, pain, skin, bladder, bowel and bone health for example.

Neuro-rehabilitation input involves teaching patients how to gradually maximize independence in spite of the (often) irreversible paralysis.

The focus is on ability and not on disability.

Nearer discharge from hospital attention will be focused to adapting the home and improving independence in day to day living activities and helping people re-integrate society.

We would like SCI patients to meet past patients with similar injuries as they can offer a glimpse of how life is further down the road.

All along the journey, we want to explain how there can be a diverse array of multidisciplinary team (MDT) members, all helping in their unique and impactful way.

We want patients to know about the myriad of ways they can stay active and all the places they can go in public, which will offer a disabled-friendly environment.

We also want them to know that there are alternatives to living in nappies for the rest of your life. There are ways to manage bowel and bladder incontinence.

There are mobility aids, medical devices, home adaptations, methods of pain relief, physical therapy and countless other ways they can rely on to improve.

We will move forward with the advances of medicine and technology, keeping patients in the loop at every step.

### **Bringing Awareness and Delivering Training in SCI.**

Between the 14th-17th May 2018, we welcomed international colleagues and opinion leaders in the field of SCI to help us create a learning platform, educating MDT collaborators on the urgent need for adequate methods of SCI Neurorehabilitation.

We invited SCI sufferers and their advocates so that they may join our movement for their cause and feel empowered as we stand for them, both in Mauritius and the Global arena.

We offered free places to 50 Government clinicians (doctors, therapists and nurses) thanks to support from World Federation Of Neurorehabilitation (WFNR), International Spinal Cord

Society (ISCOS), UK based spinal Charities (Spirit and Stoke Mandeville National Spinal Charity) as well as sponsorship from Ottobock, Mauritius Union of Insurance and Clinique Fortis Darne.

Neuram 2018 in its entirety consisted of a two day Workshop on 14-15th May, preceding the two-day conference on 16-17th May.

### **The Workshop**

The workshop had a total of around ninety delegates, consisting of SCI patients, their carers and family members as well as clinical professionals of the field. This included Doctors, Nurses, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, and other Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) health professionals.

The Workshop was led by UK specialists Mrs Sue Paddison, Mrs Shiva Jamwal, Ms Fiona Stephenson and Professor Anba Soopramanien as well as by Mr Shivjeet Raghaw from the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre. They work predominantly in Neurorehabilitation as a Superintendent Physiotherapist, Head Occupational Therapist, SCI Nurse Specialist, Consultant in Spinal Injuries and Peer Support Counsellor/trainer respectively. They delivered highly valuable specialist training on SCI issues including but not limited to:-

- The importance of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) in working together to ensure holistic patient-centred care.
- Causes of SCI in Mauritius: traumatic, such as road traffic accidents and falls; non-traumatic (infections, tumours and vascular causes).
- SCI levels and functional expectations.
- Risk Management in the acute stage.
- Respiratory management, pressure care and bowel and bladder management.
- Skin care, bed positioning.
- Joint preservation and complication prevention.
- Activities of daily living and mobilization.
- Psychological support and sexual function.
- Splinting and hand therapy.
- Community integration.

The rationale behind the workshops was to provide 'hands-on' training and create an educational exchange between patients, therapists and the Workshop leaders, to identify and address SCI rehabilitation needs in Mauritius. We believe that creating Peer Counsellor relationships with patients, to act as a bridge between home and MDT services, can provide a crucial method of support networking.

A common theme throughout the Workshop and Conference was the compulsory need to facilitate collaboration of Multi-Disciplinary Teams in SCI intervention. Each member of the

team offers a unique contribution to neurorehabilitation. A truly patient-centred effort must be MDT synergistic in order to address the many complex needs of the SCI healthcare pathway.

## **The Conference**

On Wednesday 16th May 2018, His Excellency the President of Mauritius kindly attended the Opening Ceremony of NEURAM's International Spinal Cord Injury Conference in Neurorehabilitation and opened the Conference. He delivered a speech, outlining our initiatives and what we stand for. We were honoured to receive the understanding and support of His Excellency.

We welcomed the above named speakers as well as other experts including:

- Keynote Speaker- Professor Jean-Jacques Wyndaele- President of the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCOs) Antwerp, Belgium.
- Professor Anba Soopramanien, Mauritian and Consultant in Spinal Injuries and Rehabilitation Medicine, UK
- Dr Francois Theron- Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon & Treasurer of African Spinal Cord Injury Network (AFSCIN) Pretoria, South Africa.
- Dr Rajiv Reebye- Clinical Associate Professor from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC Canada and Consultant in Rehabilitation Medicine, Vancouver, Canada.
- Mrs Sue Paddison, Superintendant Physiotherapist, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital- London- UK
- Mrs Shiva Jamwal, Head Occupational Therapist Royal Bucks Hospital, Aylesbury
- Ms Fiona Stephenson, Specialist Nurse and Service Manager Livability Spinal Injury Centre, Salisbury
- Mr Pradeep Thumbikat- Consultant in Spinal Injuries, Sheffield, UK.
- Dr Sabahat Wasti, Consultant in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Abu Dhabi.
- Dr Eknath Rajan- Consultant in Charge JJ Nehru Hospital, Mauritius.

Topics of discussion included, but were not limited to:

- Living with SCI
- Neurological Assessment of Acute Injuries
- Surgical Management of SCI
- Bladder Management in Developing Countries
- Acute Nursing & Conservative Management
- Acute Medical Complications of SCI and their Management
- Bladder Management: the Nursing Perspective
- Acute Management: Physiotherapy

- Acute Management; Occupational Therapy
- Treatment & Prevention of Pressure Ulcers
- Peer Support
- Urinary Tract Infections
- Bowel Management
- Management of Spasticity
- Long-Term Management of SCI: Physiotherapy
- Long-Term Management of SCI: Occupational Therapy
- Long-Term Management of SCI: Medical Complications
- Service Development on Rehabilitation Medicine
- Accessibility Issues & Building Design
- Management of SCI in Mauritius

OMNICANE Ltd kindly sponsored a Conference dinner on Wednesday 16.05.18. at the Holiday Inn, near to SSR International airport.

On Friday 19th May, His Excellency The President of Mauritius kindly invited the speakers for a working lunch at the State House. The speakers were very impressed with his comments and pertinent questions relevant to Spinal Cord Injury.

### **The Feedback:**

We had over 150 attendees over the two Conference days. This consisted of mostly Doctors and other MDT (multi-disciplinary team) members. Many commented on how paramount it is to have a neuro-rehabilitation inpatient service for patients with spinal cord injury in Mauritius. Our Evaluation Forms from both the Workshops and Conference reported overall “excellent” feedback with many commenting on the impeccable standard of training as well as the commendable work of NEURAM. Mauritian health care workers involved in neuro-rehabilitation voiced their opinion of their willingness to work towards developing a hospital based neuro-rehabilitation unit with the support and guidance of NEURAM.

We are extremely proud of the outcome of the past week and hope to continue directing our efforts towards NEURAM’s initiatives for neurorehabilitation in Mauritius.

### **Recommendations:**

1. In Hospital (with the help of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life):
  - Provide teaching on multidisciplinary SCI management in the acute, post-acute and long term stages

- **Set up a spinal rehabilitation centre in an acute hospital**, to include spinal surgery and rehabilitation care (i.e. to prevent pressure ulcers, to treat spasticity, treat pressure ulcers when they occur, improve bowel and bladder care, psychological support to patients with spinal cord injury and their relatives).
2. In the Community:
- Provide bladder and bowel care in the community.
  - Help with accessibility and adaptations in the homes of patients, public roads and buildings.
  - Make transport more accessible with appropriate adapted vehicles.
  - Encourage return to work and participation in sports.
  - Organise a mobile unit to serve patients in their homes.
  - In the medium to long term, to **set up a specialist neurorehabilitation centre**.

One of the positive offshoots and outcomes of improvement of the care to the neurologically impaired would be to offer a safe environment for people with neurological disability, thus promoting medical tourism to Mauritius for the disabled community.

### **Conclusions:**

NEURAM achieved its goals of bringing awareness on the issues of neuro-rehabilitation in Mauritius. It would like to build on the momentum gathered during the four days to improve the quality of life of people with spinal cord injury.

### **Thanks:**

We extend our special thanks to:

- His Excellency the President of the Republic of Mauritius, Mr Paramasivum Vyapoory
- His Excellency the Minister Mentor, Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, who spared the time to receive us at the Ministry and offered some advice.
- The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life for transport facilities for the speakers.
- The Vice Chancellor and Senior Staff of University of Mauritius for hosting the workshop at their premises at the CORE BUILDING, EBENE.
- Eclosia Group and Hennessy Hotel offering their facilities (conference hall and bedrooms) at a discounted rate.
- People with SCI who contributed greatly to our Workshop and Conference by speaking about their experiences of living with life-changing disability: Mr Anil Bappoo (recorded and live), Ms Vicky Holton (recorded messages which were excerpts from a film) and Mr Alok Vyas (recorded and live). They offered truly invaluable insight for all attendees, in conveying the impact SCI has on their lives. They talked of their coping strategies as well as their difficulties and abilities. They also gave us renewed realisation of our collective social responsibility to fight for their cause.
- Bournemouth University (UK) and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life (Mauritius) for endorsing the events.
- The sponsors: Ottobock, Mauritius Union of Insurance, Clinique Fortis Darne, Omnicane Ltd.

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- Charities who provided educational grants: World Federation of Neuro-Rehabilitation (WFNR), International Spinal Cord Society (ISCOS), UK based spinal cord charities (Spirit and Stoke Mandeville National Spinal Charity),
- The Neuram Councillors and numerous volunteers who prepared conference bags, organized lunches, prepared and printed certificates and attended to the many tasks that they were given.
- Mr Rene Soobaroyen, Professional Photographer and his colleague, who offered us four days' filming including editing, free of charge.
- Susan Hayden and Daisy Lam from BCD Meetings and Events, London for helping us to host the meeting.
- Private companies and Clinique Fortis Darne who made available wheelchairs and beds for our workshops.
- The local press who offered much exposure: Le Defi, l'Express, Le Mauricien Ltd and Week-End, Mauritius Times, MBCTV (national TV station), ION (Private TV channel).



Professor Anba Soopramanien  
Consultant in Spinal Injuries and Rehabilitation Medicine  
Chair and Co-Founder NEURAM FOUNDATION  
01.06.18



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