# Standardization of Nursing and Allied Health Care for Patients with Spinal Cord Injury in Alberta Hospitals

### **Background**

- A spinal cord injury (SCI) is a life altering event, resulting in complex care needs and patients often requiring hospitalization (acute and rehabilitation) for an extended period of time.
- Patients living with an SCI and their families report that there is a lack of, or inconsistent, care, teaching and supports across hospital sites.
- **Staff** report that care is different across the sites, and often dependent upon the unit or program that the patient is admitted to.

### **Project Plan & Goals**

- The Neurosciences, Rehabilitation & Vision Strategic Clinical Network™ (NRV SCN) is supporting Nursing and Allied Health (ex. Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy etc.) professionals, in collaboration with persons with lived experience, to standardize the care of patients with SCI in hospital.
- Subject matter experts have prioritized 9 topics for standardization: Autonomic Dysreflexia, Neurogenic Bladder Management, Neurogenic Bowel Management, Skin Integrity & Pressure Injury Prevention, Respiratory Care, Pain & Spasticity Management, Psychological Care & Peer Support, Transitions in Care, and Spinal Signs Assessment.



- This work is being informed by a research grant to study the patient and family experience in acute care and inpatient rehabilitation, as well as by a scoping review of best practice guidelines for nursing care in SCI.
- Nursing and Allied Health care being aligned with medical management.
- The goals of this initiative is to: decrease practice variation, improve the patient and family experience, improve transitions in care, and improve safety for patients.

Creating a standardized pathway of care that is evidenced-based, as well as patient and family focused, will likely increase patient satisfaction and patient outcomes.



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### **Progress**

- AHS Autonomic Dysreflexia (AD) protocol, outlining a standard approach to the recognition and treatment of this medical emergency for patients with SCI, created, approved and came into effect on September 15, 2021.
- <u>Alberta AD wallet card</u> created in collaboration with SCI-Alberta, and <u>AD content</u> on <u>myHealthAlberta.ca</u> updated.
- Management of Neurogenic bowel and bladder and skin integrity topics complete.

#### **Next Steps**

- Finalize topic content, create webpage, focus on implementation.
- Create education resources.
- This standardization will be supported by the new provincial electronic clinical information system (CIS), Connect Care, that will eventually be implemented province-wide, transforming how patient information flows between patients and their healthcare providers.



A standardized care plan for patients with acute SCI will be built into Connect
Care and will support communication between providers, as well as smoother
transitions in care.

#### **Questions? Get Involved?**

If you have any questions regarding this initiative, or would like to get involved; please contact the NRV SCN at: <a href="mailto:NeuroRehabVision.SCN@ahs.ca">NeuroRehabVision.SCN@ahs.ca</a>.

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