



**PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION  
SPINAL CORD INJURY MEDICINE FELLOWSHIP  
GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

**LOCATIONS:**

University of Texas Southwestern Hospitals (Zale Lipshy)  
Parkland Health and Hospital Systems  
Dallas, Texas

**SUPERVISING PHYSICIANS ON SITE:**

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**Revised: March 2009**

The **UT Southwestern Hospitals** rotation adults with spinal cord injury in a university tertiary-care referral hospital dedicated to neurosurgery and rehabilitation medicine. The **Parkland Health and Hospital Systems** provides unique exposure to acute trauma and neurosurgical ICU patients, as well as chronic SCI management through dedicated outpatient clinics serving Dallas County indigent population.

**SPINAL CORD INJURY  
OBJECTIVES-FELLOW LEVEL**

**Patient Care**

The resident (fellow) will be expected to:

- Perform efficient, detailed assessments of adults with spinal cord injury admitted for acute hospitalization to other surgical services. The fellow is responsible for inpatient consultation notes, periodic progress notes, interface with other interdisciplinary team members, and interdisciplinary conference.

- Diagnose physical, cognitive and psychosocial impairments in adult rehabilitation patients with spinal cord injury.
- Create comprehensive medical rehabilitation problem lists and treatment plans for adult patients with spinal cord injury.
- Determine appropriate rehabilitation services based on the patient's position in the continuum of care, and direct placement into inpatient rehabilitation, outpatient rehabilitation, long term care, or hospice.
- Write consults to therapists outlining patient history, problems to be addressed, and clearly defined precautions.
- Efficiently evaluate and formulate treatment plans for medical complications in SCI population. Demonstrate knowledge of preventative strategies to minimize complications for such population.
- Create comprehensive differential diagnoses for abnormal physical examination findings in persons with SCI.
- Provide comprehensive medical and rehabilitation management of spinal cord injury patients who present for follow-up in the outpatient setting.
- Be able to prescribe appropriate equipment needs including seating, orthotics, and assistive technologies.

**Procedural Skills:**

- Demonstrate proficiency with botulinum neurotoxin and other neuromuscular blockade procedures in the adult spinal cord injury population. Understand safe handling and preparation of the material, indications and contraindications for use.

- Demonstrate proficiency with management of patients with intrathecal baclofen pump including the evaluation, dosing, and pump interrogation techniques for adult patients who have spinal cord injury and other disorders of tone.

### **Medical Knowledge**

The SCI Fellow will be expected to:

- Evaluate patients with non-traumatic myelopathies, and know the differential diagnosis for myelopathy.
- Be able to outline types of congenital spinal cord abnormalities.
- Be able to outline the differences in demographics, clinical course, and most common levels of injury for adults with SCI.
- Describe the problems associated with the dual diagnosis patient (spinal cord injury and brain injury).
- Describe the clinical presentation and management of patients with syringomyelia.
- Assess respiratory dysfunction in spinal cord disorders.
- Identify and describe fundamental basic science concepts pertinent to SCI medicine, including pathophysiology, kinesiology, and neurophysiology.
- Recognize prophylactic and therapeutic strategies for thromboembolic disease in the SCI patient. Use current guidelines for treatment of venous thromboembolism.
- Apply principles of primary care for persons with spinal cord injury.
- Describe women's health challenges after spinal cord injury.
- Understand the medical problems associated with spinal cord injury and their treatment, including but not limited to: bowel, bladder, pulmonary, skin, nutrition,

- autonomic dysreflexia/hyperreflexia (AD/AH), deep venous thrombosis (DVT)/pulmonary embolism (PE), hypercalcemia, temperature regulation, orthostatic hypotension, latex allergy, spasticity.
- Enhance skills interpreting radiological imaging of the spine, including computerized tomography and magnetic resonance scans of cervical, thoracic and lumbar spine.
  - Develop ability to identify surgical hardware used for spinal fixation, and know spinal precautions associated with both traumatic and degenerative spinal surgery and post-operative recovery.

### **Practice-Based Learning and Improvement**

The SCI Fellow will be expected to:

- Locate, appraise and assimilate evidence from the scientific literature into daily practice.
- Use the available medical literature to evaluate one's patient care practice. Identify gaps in medical knowledge pertaining to persons with SCI.
- Perform independent, focused medical database searches. Educate more junior residents in this regard.
- Assess appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of diagnostic testing and how it affects patient treatment, outcomes, and overall patient management.
- Understand healthcare utilization issues in relation to diagnostic testing and therapy.
- Present educational topics to medical students, residents, allied health professionals, and the interdisciplinary team. Also facilitate learning within the interdisciplinary environment.
- Identify adverse outcomes from past medical and rehabilitation treatment decisions and alter future treatment where appropriate. Utilize evidence-based guidelines in treatment when feasible.

## **Interpersonal and communication Skills**

The SCI fellow will be expected to:

- Understand psychosocial, educational and vocational issues in SCI.
- Utilizing best evidence regarding outcomes after acute SCI, counsel patients with SCI and their families regarding prognosis.
- Maintain a balance of compassion and honesty, and respect patient's hopes and spiritual perspectives.
- Communicate clearly and effectively with persons with SCI and their families. Exhibit empathy and understanding.
- Counsel patients with SCI and their families regarding inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation goals.
- Obtain consultation as appropriate and write detailed consult requests which identify relevant issues.
- Be able to plan long-term follow-up including growth problems, scoliosis, educational, vocational training and transition to independent adult life in the community.
- Develop skills interacting with neurological surgeons, orthopaedic spine surgeons, and other specialists involved with the care of spinal cord injured patients.
- Utilize effective listening skills in interdisciplinary meetings and one-on-one interactions.

## **Professionalism**

The SCI fellow will be expected to:

- Complete inpatient, outpatient and consult visits and charting in a timely manner. Take responsibility for completion of notes.
- Be sensitive to cultural differences and needs of persons with SCI, their families, and other members of the interdisciplinary team.
- Arrive on time for lectures and rounds.

- Apply sound ethical principles in practice including patient confidentiality, informed consent and provisions of withholding care. Be aware of disability rights perspectives on life-sustaining treatment.
- Exhibit appropriate dress and behavior.
- Perform signout activities with other providers which are focused and prioritized.
- Communicate relevant medical information with other providers for patients moving into different care settings.
- Advocate strongly and effectively for patients. Assist them in their interactions with other health care providers and in other settings in order to optimize health and wellness.

### **Systems-based Practice**

The SCI fellow will be expected to:

- Be aware of the Medicare eligibility requirements for inpatient rehab including the criteria for ongoing inpatient treatment and restrictions on the number of days of hospitalization per year.
- Effectively educate clinicians from other services on the role of SCI medicine and rehabilitation.
- Describe CARF certification requirements.
- Understand the role and functions of the medical director in a rehabilitation facility.

### **Resources**

1. Lin, V. et al Spinal Cord Medicine: Principles and Practice (text)
2. Kirshblum, Spinal Cord Medicine (text)
3. Molnar, Rehabilitation, SCI chapter and other chapters as suggested by Dr. McDonald
4. Relevant literature as suggested by Drs. Hamilton and McDonald

End of Document

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This document is subject to periodic revision. The version available online at the UTSouthwestern web site is the most current version.