

Remembering Ricky Bannister

Our sincere condolences to Ricky Bannister's family. Ricky fractured his C5 vertebrae in 2013 after a horse riding accident. Tragically after 18 months of fighting severe health issues Ricky passed away, the day after his son's first birthday.



His family very kindly asked for donations to be made to SpinalCure in lieu of flowers. We are honoured by their thoughtfulness and will continue to work towards a cure so that tragedies like Ricky's become a thing of the past.

5 WAYS YOU CAN HELP

- ▶ **Help spread the word**
"Like" us on Facebook and forward our e-newsletter to a friend
- ▶ **Have fun and raise funds**
Visit www.everydayhero.com.au and sign up for an event, or create your own, choosing SpinalCure as your charity
- ▶ **Make a gift to SpinalCure in your Will**
A bequest is a wonderful way to help all those affected by spinal cord injury
- ▶ **Donate an auction item**
An experience or item we can auction or raffle to raise funds
- ▶ **Make a donation**
Online at www.spinalcure.org.au or complete the form below.

THANK YOU



www.spinalcure.org.au
connect
Funding research to cure spinal cord injury

MERRY CHRISTMAS

To all those affected by spinal cord injury and to everyone working towards a cure.

ACADEMY AWARDS LUNCH FOR SPINALCURE!

We are delighted to announce that the Nine Network will be supporting SpinalCure at the 2015 lunch to commemorate the 87th Academy Awards. The event will be held on February 23rd at Luke Mangan's Glass Brasserie at the Hilton, Sydney with all proceeds going to SpinalCure. Guests will include on-air talent, film distribution companies, TV production companies, media, as well as actor agents and their clients.

GUILT FREE SHOPPING

Do you still have Christmas shopping to do? Or perhaps you need a little guilt-free retail therapy! With Shopnate you can raise funds for research just by shopping online at scores of popular stores.



and many, many more!

1. You Shop

Shop at big name stores on Shopnate without paying a cent more.

2. They Donate

Retailers pay us a commission via Shopnate.

3. Everyone Smiles

SpinalCure now has extra funds for research and you feel good!

Find out more & go shopping at www.spinalcure.org.au/shopnate

IT'S EASY TO DONATE

Check out our website www.spinalcure.org.au/donate or simply use the form on the back page

FIND US ONLINE

Stay up-to-date with research and SpinalCure news.

Visit the website and sign up for monthly email updates, follow @spinalcure on Twitter or join the conversation Facebook: facebook.com/spinalcure



DONATION FORM

Our quest for a cure for spinal cord injury relies on your generous support. On behalf of all those living with this devastating condition, we thank you.

Dr Mr Mrs Ms Miss Other

First name: _____ Last name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ Post code: _____

Email address: _____

Telephone: () _____

Please accept my donation of: \$

Please make cheques payable to **Spinal Cure Australia** Please send me an Annual Report

or charge my Mastercard Visa Amex Diners Please send me Bequest information

I would like to make regular donations through my credit card:

Amount to be debited automatically \$

Frequency: Monthly Quarterly Other

Commencement date: _____

Signature: _____

Card expiry date: /

Please mail FREEPOST to: SpinalCure Australia, Reply Paid 86831, Mona Vale NSW 1660 or donate online at www.spinalcure.org.au/donate A receipt will be issued to all donors. Donations of \$2.00 or more are tax deductible.

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16TH ANNUAL GOLF DAY



Mark 'Boomer' Bylsma

In September we returned to the beautiful Camden Valley Resort golf course for the Annual SpinalCure Golf day—now in its 16th year. Founded by Kelly and Robert McCann the day is coordinated by our great friends at the MacArthur Lions Club. The morning's 4-person Ambrose competition was punctuated by the crack of another ball being hammered down the fairway by Australian long drive champion Mark "Boomer" Bylsma. The wise-cracking goliath was securing an extra \$10 donation from golfers to send their ball sailing from the tee towards, and in many cases straight onto the green!

After play the teams tucked into a superb buffet lunch and enjoyed a raffle, auction and short talk by Duncan Wallace to let them know of the exciting plans SpinalCure has for the money raised.

We are extremely grateful to Steve White, Stuart Miln and all the Macarthur Lions for organising another terrific day.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

SpinalCure relies on the generosity of our supporters, both individuals and companies, to make the hunt for a cure possible. We love to hear about the many ways you find to raise funds.

1000km cycled, \$20,000 raised!

The last edition of 'Connect' featured Xander Becarri's plans to cycle the 1000km from Brisbane to Wollongong to raise funds for spinal cord injury research. That challenge has now been accomplished! Inspired by a good friend who was injured in a snowboarding accident, Xander spent two weeks on the road, camping each night in the tiny pup tent he carried with him. He arrived at the North Wollongong Hotel to loud cheers from friends. Celebrations continued throughout the afternoon and evening with live music and a raffle which contributed to the fabulous \$20,000 raised.



Xander Becarri and his friend Dean Martellozzo

Everyday Heros

In June this year Melissa Williams' friend Ben came off his motorbike and fractured his neck. Thankfully he has made a full recovery but as Melissa says "accidents do happen and not everyone will be as lucky as Ben". So, Melissa tackled the "Age Run" in Melbourne, raising over \$1500 for research.

In August thousands of runners joined Sydney's challenging City2Surf. Among them was Team Dubois: five siblings inspired by their father who was paralysed in a motorbike accident. Kara Dubois explains, "He has never failed to remain positive and optimistic throughout it all". Kara continued her fundraising efforts after the event by requesting donations to SpinalCure in lieu of birthday presents for her son Flynn's first birthday. Thank you to Kara, Clarissa, Riley, Curtis and Charlotte and Happy Birthday Flynn!



Team Dubois

sizzle4aQure

Long time supporters 5Sports have launched their sizzle4aQure. Four nights a week they are holding a sausage sizzle at the 5Sports sports complex in Caringbah, with all proceeds coming to SpinalCure. Why the 'Q'? 5Sports' Anthony Bennett explains, "Because people ask and it gets the conversation about SCI research started!" If you live locally, drop by and grab a sausage. (125 The Boulevard Caringbah NSW) www.5sports.com.au

Left: Anthony Bennett models a sizzle4aQure Burner shirt. (On sale at 5Sports)

You too can make a difference

Create your own challenge or join an organised event.

To find out more get in touch or visit spinalcure.org.au/hero

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

The last six months have seen big advances, even bigger claims and some frenzied media attention for SCI research...

In October was the news that Darek Fidyka, a complete paraplegic, was walking again after receiving an olfactory ensheathing glial cell transplant. University College London (UCL)'s Prof Geoffrey Raisman and colleagues from Poland had treated Darek with nerve tissue grafts and cells cultured from his olfactory bulb (found at the back of the nose). After 19 months, he was able to take steps when supporting himself with a walking frame! This is highly encouraging though Darek's injury was unusual—a knife wound, in his case a 'clean' break. The team plans to treat another 10 people and the results of this trial will be eagerly awaited.

At the recent Working2Walk Symposium in Canada, Prof Reggie Edgerton, who co-pioneered the treatment, presented some further advances in this 'neuromodulation' field. In addition to an implanted epidural stimulator, he is now developing a new non-invasive transcutaneous (through the skin) stimulator that could soon be ready for market. Prof Edgerton's team has

also been working on electrical stimulation aimed at the upper limbs and spoke very briefly about five tetraplegics gaining some return of hand function.

Prof Edgerton's lab is also hoping to return hand control by increasing levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin within the spinal cord using a serotonergic agonist. They hope this will open communication pathways that cells ordinarily wouldn't recognise thus restoring some function. (Uncontrolled serotonin release after injury is thought to be responsible for the muscle spasm that can be so debilitating in those with a high level SCI. Also, it is thought that an interaction between nitrogen intake and serotonin may be responsible for the improvements experienced by paralysed scuba divers).

Another drug that has shown favourable results in the lab is chondroitinase: an enzyme which helps to dissolve scar tissue around the injury. A clinical trial has now started in Iowa, USA treating spinal cord injured dogs and a team from

Cambridge UK has been given funding to develop a engineered chondroitinase suitable to test in humans.

Cure-related clinical trials testing promising treatments in people are also progressing. Over a dozen trials are now in progress around the world testing a great range of approaches including stem cells, Schwann cells, umbilical cord cells, neuro-spinal scaffolds and various drug therapies—some in acute cases and

"The cure for paralysis is almost here, and when we get there it won't be a miracle, it will be because we worked!" - Kate Willette, author

some for chronic injuries. Combined, these trials will enrol over 1000 people. One common feature shared by several trials is the

intense post-treatment exercise programs that patients follow.

While all this research holds such great promise it is incredibly disappointing to note that federal government investment in science has reached a 30-year low. Now more than ever our scientists are relying on SpinalCure supporters and the community to help maintain the valuable Australian contribution to the global drive towards a cure for paralysis.

For references and further information please see this article on-line at www.spinalcure.org.au/research-roundup-Nov14

SPINALCURE TRAVEL GRANTS

Each year SpinalCure offers a small number of grants to help researchers travel to collaborate with others working to cure spinal cord injury (SCI). Recently two awards of \$2000 were allocated.

During November Dr Michelle Rank PhD travelled to Washington DC to present a paper entitled "Changes in electrophysiological properties of interneurons over time following incomplete spinal cord injury" at The Society for Neuroscience conference. Dr Rank's current research at the University of Newcastle examines how

exercise training alters the properties of nerve cells in the injured spinal cord.

In 2013 at a conference in India, SCIA won the ASCON prize for best paper and donated the prize money to fund a representative from India to come to Australia. SCIA and SpinalCure provided additional resources to make this a reality and in September Mr Vignesh Gunasekaran, from Ganga Hospital, travelled to Australia and visited Sydney spinal units, rehabilitation centres and the Walk On program exchanging ideas and

learning from our spinal cord injury medical experts.

Below: Vignesh Gunasekaran & Duncan Wallace

