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**Statement to European Regional meeting,  
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Policy and technical topics  
Progress reports on noncommunicable  
diseases: Action plan for the implementation  
of the european strategy for the prevention  
and control of Noncommunicable diseases  
2012-2016**

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The International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) promotes the **highest standard of care in the practice of spinal cord injury** for men, women and children throughout the world. Through its **medical and multi disciplinary team of professionals** ISCoS endeavours to foster **education, research and clinical excellence**.

ISCoS has a membership of over **1,000 clinicians and scientists** from **87 countries** and is **continuously expanding** both in membership and new horizons.

- ISCoS is an international, impartial, non-political and non-profit making association whose purpose is to study all problems relating to traumatic and non-traumatic lesions of the spinal cord. This includes causes, prevention, basic and clinical research, medical and surgical management, clinical practice, education, rehabilitation and social reintegration.
- ISCoS advises, encourages, promotes and assists in efforts
  - to co-ordinate and guide research, development and evaluation of activities related to spinal cord lesions throughout the world.
  - by those responsible for the care of patients to co-ordinate these activities throughout the world.
  - by those responsible for the education and training of medical professionals and professionals allied to medicine to co-ordinate these activities globally.

The International Spinal Cord Society works in collaboration with national and international bodies, thereby encouraging the most efficient use of available resources worldwide.

Among the missions of the Society, the Prevention of the spinal cord lesions (SCL) and the teaching worldwide the most advanced care for the persons with SCL are of fundamental importance.

The spinal cord lesion, as a consequence of a trauma, represents a pathology that has a

highly negative impact on the quality of life of the persons and their families. The social costs are very elevated, due to low level of autonomy and independence and the complications that are consequence of the neurological pathology – In Australia the lifetime costs per incidence case, including financial costs and burden of disease costs, were estimated to be 5.0 million Australian dollars for a person with paraplegia and 9.5 million for a person with quadriplegia (The economic cost of spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury in Australia. Access Economics report for the Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative, 2009).

For these reasons it is mandatory, in the health and social strategy for the coming years in Europe, to increase the emphasis on prevention of the major traumas (Road traffic accidents, work related accidents, sport and leisure accidents), that are the causes of death, head injury, spinal cord injuries and complicated bone fractures. The prevention strategy must rarely be specific for SCL, but generically related to the trauma.

Once the lesion has happened, it is mandatory to provide the appropriate standards of care in specialised centres by specialised professionals, in order to obtain the best outcome, the best prevention of secondary complications and finally the best social reintegration, with the most satisfactory results both for the patients, their families and the entire community, dramatically lowering the lifelong costs.

ISCoS, in order to obtain such results, is promoting the highest level of education worldwide through specific workshops and an e-learning program called elearns ( [www.elearns.org](http://www.elearns.org) ), a free online learning package covering all aspects of SCI management, and, in Europe, has presented a project for the institution of a specialised centre (Spinal Cord Centre) in Albania to become a referral center for the Balkan area. Such project has been approved by the former Minister of Health of Albania and needs to be supported by the European community.

It has collaborated with WHO on the International Perspectives of Spinal Cord Injury (IPSCI) project, a high level document describing the current state of SCI management around the world and containing recommendations for future policy decisions. IPSCI will be launched at the ISCoS Annual Meeting in Turkey in 6 weeks.

In conclusion ISCoS is asking WHO to take into consideration, in defining the strategic plan for the coming 6 years in Europe, the need to promote and support the prevention of major traumas and the institution of specialised centres for SCL with appropriately trained personnel to cover all European areas. ISCoS is ready to give its cultural and technical contribution to this enterprise.

Dr Sergio Aito

ISCoS delegate to European Regional Committee meeting, Sept, 2013

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