

# Clinical Psychology at the NSIC

Department of Clinical Psychology:

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## **Coping with Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)**

Few people can be prepared for the experience of SCI - it is a major trauma in anyone's life and presents individuals and their families with many challenges and concerns. There are no set responses to SCI. We are all individuals and our response is often determined by our own life experiences and history of coping. The sense of loss may trigger feelings of depression, fears about the future may cause anxiety, and a sense of injustice may cause anger. All these responses can be considered part of the normal emotional reaction and adjustment process.

Coping with SCI can involve making adjustments in all aspects of life. Areas such as work, housing and relationships can be affected, and new plans may need to be made.

Clinical Psychologists provide support to help people manage the emotional challenges they face as they learn to cope with, and adjust to, living with a spinal cord injury. Psychologists talk to people about how they are coping and try to identify ways of coping more effectively.

Other factors can make people more vulnerable to difficulties with coping with SCI. For example, if someone has sustained a brain injury as well, they may need extra help. People with mental health problems may need extra support too.

Psychologists are also involved in supporting families and couples, and can provide a private and confidential space to discuss the impact of the SCI, particularly sensitive issues such as changes in relationships and sexual issues.

Pain can be a major issue following SCI. Psychologists are part of the multidisciplinary team who help people to manage their pain - you should not suffer in silence.

## **What to expect when seeing a Clinical Psychologist**

Meeting with a Clinical Psychologist to resolve difficulties is a joint agreement between the psychologist and the patient, and progress towards the desired goals will be assessed and discussed during the meetings. Issues discussed with the Clinical Psychologist are confidential and will only be discussed with other members of the team if relevant. Each person referred has a file in which a record of the meetings is kept and this does not form part of the general medical notes. An individual can discontinue contact with their Psychologist at any time without affecting their overall treatment.

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## **COMPLAINTS/COMPLIMENTS**

If you are unhappy about any aspect of the service provided and do not feel you can resolve this informally with the Clinical Psychologist or the Department of Clinical Psychology, then you may make a formal complaint. Buckinghamshire Hospitals NHS Trust complaints leaflets are available in the foyer of the NSIC or on the wards.

If you are particularly happy about the service you have received, you are welcome to let the Clinical Psychologist and Stoke Mandeville Hospital know, preferably in writing.

All NHS Trusts have a commitment to monitoring and improving the quality of their services and therefore comments from users of those services are especially helpful.

In addition to providing patients and their families with emotional support, the Department of Clinical Psychology also coordinates the 'Needs Assessment and Goal Planning Programme' at the NSIC. This award-winning programme aims to ensure that patients get the most from the rehabilitation process, and the Needs Assessment Checklist provides a basis for the clinical audit of rehabilitation activity and patient progress.

The department is also active in conducting and implementing patient focussed research and leads the field in researching factors which help people cope and adjust to spinal cord injuries. The department also contributes to staff training on building clinical awareness, skills and management.

The Department has prepared a number of patient information materials, including a specially designed autohypnotic relaxation recording for people with spinal cord injury, which is available on cassette or CD. The department also has leaflets on 'Coping with Spinal Cord Injury', 'Coping with Anxiety', 'Memory Difficulties and Spinal Cord Injury', 'Coping with Depression', 'Coping with Chronic Pain', 'Supporting Children when their Parent has a SCI', 'Coping Effectiveness Training' and 'The Needs Assessment and Goal Planning Programme'. The above leaflets are available on each of the wards, or otherwise please contact the Department.

### **How do I get to see a Clinical Psychologist?**

Any member of the clinical team can refer a patient to the clinical psychology service, or an individual patient or family member can request to be seen. During the initial appointment, the Clinical Psychologist will assess the nature and extent of any difficulties. This meeting may include an assessment of mood and the coping strategies an individual is using to help manage and cope with spinal cord injury. As mentioned above, sustaining a SCI is a traumatic event in anyone's life and may trigger many emotions and concerns. Research and experience has shown that discussing these in a confidential environment, focussed on your individual needs, helps people to cope and adjust in the long term to their injury.

## **The Department of Clinical Psychology**

### **PROFESSOR PAUL KENNEDY ...**

Consultant Clinical Psychologist.  
Paul established the Department of Clinical Psychology in 1988 and is also Trust Head of Clinical Psychology. Paul works at the NSIC on Wednesdays and Thursdays and generally covers the patients under the medical care of Dr Allison Graham.



### **DR JANE DUFF ...**

Consultant Clinical Psychologist.  
Jane is currently on maternity leave (one year from September 2008).



### **DR IMOGEN COTTER ...**

Principal Clinical Psychologist. Imogen works Tuesdays and Thursdays and mainly covers patients under the medical care of Mr Dennis Newton.





**DR GUINEVERE WEBSTER ...**

Clinical Psychologist. Guin mainly covers the patients under the medical care of Dr Ali Jamous. Her working days are Mondays and Tuesdays.



**DR ZÖE CHEVALIER ...**

Clinical Psychologist. Zöe is currently on maternity leave (one year from April 2009).

**DR ELIZABETH POUNDS-CORNISH ...**

Clinical Psychologist.



Liz joined the department in November 2007. She works Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and sees patients under the medical care of Mr Brian Gardner.

**DR ANNE-MARIE DALY ...**  
Locum Clinical Psychologist.



Anne-Marie joined the department in May 2009 to cover Zöe's maternity leave and sees patients under the medical care of Mr Derry and Mr Saif, as well as working one day a week on St Francis ward (paediatrics).

Other members of the Team:

- **Lucy Bolton**, Family Counselling Officer, is a fully qualified counsellor who offers counselling to family members, relatives or friends, giving them the opportunity to talk through their concerns and difficulties either on their own or together with other family members. She works full-time and receives supervision on a regular basis with a Clinical Psychologist.
- **Linda Hall** works 28 hours a week and is responsible for the running of our busy department, including secretarial, administration and clinical audit services. She also has overall responsibility for the administration of the NSIC's Needs Assessment Checklist.
- **Trainee Clinical Psychologists** are often on placement with the Department, either seeing patients and conducting clinical work, or involved with research.
- The department is supported at various times by **Assistant Psychologists** who contribute to research, clinical and audit work.
- The department occasionally also offers placements to **undergraduates**.