

VAMC CLEVELAND

Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders Center

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News from the Spinal Cord Injury/ Disorders Center

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Cleveland SCI ALS Center by FRANCES MCCLELLAN , RN, MSN

About ALS: Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig Disease, is a motor neuron disease that affects both upper and lower motor neurons causing degeneration throughout the brain and spinal cord. It is a progressive disease that eventually leads to death. Symptoms vary among individuals but may consist of extremity weakness, hoarseness, excessive saliva, difficulty swallowing, and shortness of breath.

ALS affects approximately 30,000 people at any given time. With about 6,000 new cases in the US each year. Men are affected more often than women, usually between the ages of 35-75. Life expectancy varies, but averages 2-5 years from the time of diagnosis.

ALS can be classified as sporadic or familial. Sporadic ALS is the most common form and can affect anyone. Familial ALS runs in families and accounts for about 10% of all ALS cases.

Veterans were found to have a higher incidence of ALS than the general population. While it is unclear why veterans are at higher risk, they are 1.5 times more likely to develop ALS no matter where or when they served. Therefore, ALS is now a 100% Service Connected disability.

The Cleveland VA SCI Center offers an Interdisciplinary Team approach to ALS care through the SCI ALS Center. Dr. Stephen Selkirk, MD, PhD. Specializes in Neuromuscular diseases and coordinates care with nursing, physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy, respiratory/ pulmonary care, hospice, nutrition, and prosthetics.

How are we doing?

In 2011 the SCI/D Center cared for:

* 42 acute rehabilitation patients with SCI/D

* All were male with an average age of 56. 80% were Caucasian and 20% African American.

- * Average length of stay for acute rehabilitation was 30 days.
- * 55% of our acute rehab patients were admitted after a traumatic injury (like a fall). 45% occurred following a nontraumatic injury (like a degenerative condition). 5% were admitted due to ALS/MS.
- * 90% of our patients were discharged back to their home in the community
- * 92% of patients reached or exceeded their functional goals by the time of discharge.
- * Overall, Veterans rated our program a 9 out of 10, and 100% of them indicated they would recommend our rehab program to another veteran with SCI.

Referral Criteria

Any Veteran with a diagnosed spinal cord injury/disorder whose functioning has the ability to improve from therapies. •?Needs 24 hour rehabilitative nursing care . ?The person has the capability to participate in an individualized rehab program with increased intensity comprised of up to three hours of therapy per day, five days per week. ?The patient is medically stable and free of communicable diseases requiring isolation. •?SCI Patients requiring acute rehab to restore function after prolonged debilitating medical course. The person has an established discharge destination.

Scope of Services

SCI System of Care provides services for eligible veteran's 18 years and older with spinal cord injuries; including tetraplegia, paraplegia, complete and incomplete injuries. Referrals are from Ohio, Southern Michigan, Western PA and New York, and West Virginia.

SCI also provides care to veterans with SCI disorders that result in neurologic deficits such as Multiple sclerosis, other demyelinating diseases, intraspinal neoplasms, vascular insults to the spinal cord, inflammatory disease of the spine or spinal cord , degenerative spine disease, unstable traumatic lesions of the spinal column to prevent neurologic deficits. Veterans with ALS for care coordination.

We provide direct 24 hour inpatient acute rehabilitative nursing care and an individualized rehab program with increased intensity comprised of up to three hours per day therapy six days per week.

Our SCI Outpatient clinic offers comprehensive services during the administrative work week, including life long follow-up, health promotion, physical medicine and rehabilitation and therapies, medical and surgical interventions and consultations, nursing care, Social work, psychological assessment and treatment, vocational rehabilitation and tele-health services.

Payer sources and fees: while insurance is billed if available, the veteran will not receive a bill for what insurance does not cover. VA fees are determined by the veteran classification/means testing. The majority of veterans with SCI are classified as category 4 which eliminates co-pays.

Mission, Vision, and values

The Mission of the Louis Stokes Cleveland Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center Spinal Cord Injury System of Care (SCSC) program is to provide high quality, state of the art health care services to those veterans with spinal cord injury and or disorders (SCI/D).

We provide compassionate and ethical care based on current evidence and clinical standards. This mission is accomplished through a comprehensive health care delivery system that encompasses acute medical and surgical care, rehabilitation, patient and family education, psychological, social, and vocational care that spans from initial injury to end of life. The professionals who serve in our SCSC program are dedicated to continuous professional development, research, and advocacy on behalf of our veterans.

Our Vision is to be on the leading edge of spinal cord injury care and research.

The Cleveland VA SCSC program is committed to improving continually the health care services we provide and maintaining a positive, caring, and helpful attitude toward all with whom we interact: patients, other The Mission of the Louis Stokes Cleveland Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center Spinal Cord Injury System of Care (SCSC) program is to provide high quality, state of the art health care services to those veterans with spinal cord injury and or disorders (SCI/D). We provide compassionate and ethical care based on current evidence and clinical standards. This mission is accomplished through a comprehensive health care delivery system that encompasses acute medical and surgical care, rehabilitation, patient and family education, psychological, social, and employees, and visitors. We place the highest value upon both education and research and seek to expand our knowledge at all levels and in all areas of endeavor. We respect the autonomy of veterans and acknowledge the importance of including patients and their families in planning of care.

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“Never in the history of the world has any soldier sacrificed more for the freedom and liberty of total strangers than the American soldier”

- Zell Miller (D) Georgia 2004