

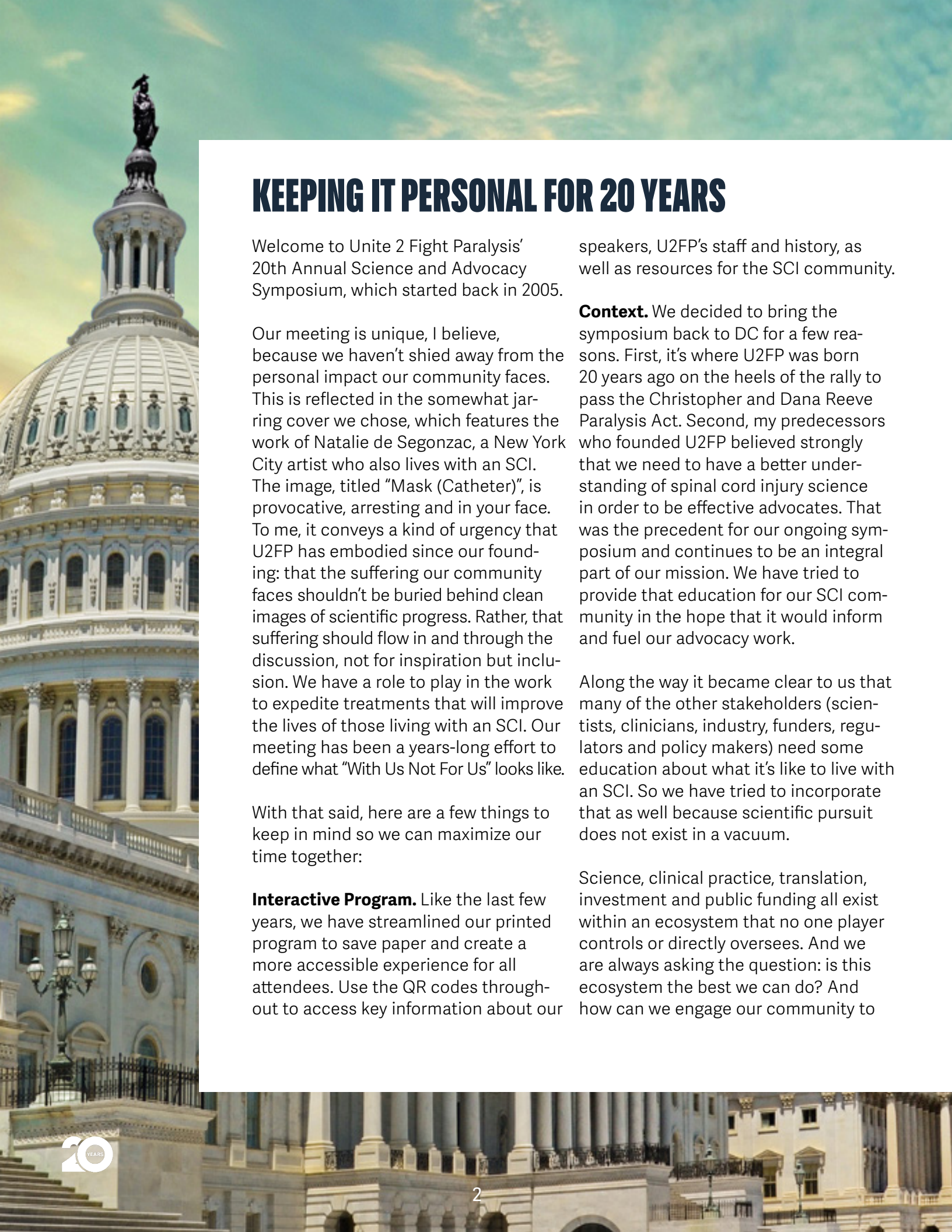
**UNITE 2 FIGHT
PARALYSIS**

SCIENCE & ADVOCACY SYMPOSIUM



CELEBRATING TWENTY YEARS

FEBRUARY 15 - 17, 2026 - WASHINGTON, D.C.
RENAISSANCE ARLINGTON CAPITAL VIEW HOTEL



KEEPING IT PERSONAL FOR 20 YEARS

Welcome to Unite 2 Fight Paralysis' 20th Annual Science and Advocacy Symposium, which started back in 2005.

Our meeting is unique, I believe, because we haven't shied away from the personal impact our community faces. This is reflected in the somewhat jarring cover we chose, which features the work of Natalie de Segonzac, a New York City artist who also lives with an SCI. The image, titled "Mask (Catheter)", is provocative, arresting and in your face. To me, it conveys a kind of urgency that U2FP has embodied since our founding: that the suffering our community faces shouldn't be buried behind clean images of scientific progress. Rather, that suffering should flow in and through the discussion, not for inspiration but inclusion. We have a role to play in the work to expedite treatments that will improve the lives of those living with an SCI. Our meeting has been a years-long effort to define what "With Us Not For Us" looks like.

With that said, here are a few things to keep in mind so we can maximize our time together:

Interactive Program. Like the last few years, we have streamlined our printed program to save paper and create a more accessible experience for all attendees. Use the QR codes throughout to access key information about our

speakers, U2FP's staff and history, as well as resources for the SCI community.

Context. We decided to bring the symposium back to DC for a few reasons. First, it's where U2FP was born 20 years ago on the heels of the rally to pass the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act. Second, my predecessors who founded U2FP believed strongly that we need to have a better understanding of spinal cord injury science in order to be effective advocates. That was the precedent for our ongoing symposium and continues to be an integral part of our mission. We have tried to provide that education for our SCI community in the hope that it would inform and fuel our advocacy work.

Along the way it became clear to us that many of the other stakeholders (scientists, clinicians, industry, funders, regulators and policy makers) need some education about what it's like to live with an SCI. So we have tried to incorporate that as well because scientific pursuit does not exist in a vacuum.

Science, clinical practice, translation, investment and public funding all exist within an ecosystem that no one player controls or directly oversees. And we are always asking the question: is this ecosystem the best we can do? And how can we engage our community to

think critically and act effectively to best leverage the passion, genius and commitment of all our partners? There is so much untapped potential for deeper collaboration between those who research the injury and those who live with it.

We are also in DC for two other reasons:

1. We thought it would be an excellent opportunity to check in on what was called "SCI 2020: Launching A Decade of Disruption in SCI Research." NIH organized that meeting in 2019 to explore the challenges in translating meaningful novel therapies for SCI, along with asking what kinds of disruptions would be required to improve outcomes for people living with SCI. We are straddling the 5 year mark of that decade. How are we doing? What has changed? These are the questions we hope to provoke.

2. We made a decision to launch a federal campaign to increase funding for SCI research in anticipation of challenges we would face in the coming years. However, we did not expect those challenges to come so quickly and harshly. Most of you now know that the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) experienced significant cuts in early 2025. The most germane to us was the **elimination** of the SCI Research Program's \$40 million portfolio. That fight has become our introduction to federal advocacy for SCI research. We hope you will join us at

the Capitol on Tuesday, February 17th for scheduled meetings with Congressional representatives and/or their staffers.

Agenda. We have structured the agenda as a series of reflective questions about the last 20 years of SCI science and advocacy, to get a clear-eyed look at where we are now. Then we will ask the questions that we hope will point us to how we can act smarter, faster and with the greatest impact for everyone involved. We are very grateful that our presenters were willing to engage these questions from their experience and ask you to share your thoughts during the discussion times.

Things need to change and there is no change without all of us listening to one another and defining the way forward together. True success can only be measured by all of us.

Sponsors. We are extremely grateful to our sponsors this year. Please take some time to visit their exhibiting booths and/or talk to their representatives to discover the great work they are doing in our community.

Thank you for being here!



Matthew Rodreick
U2FP Executive Director



The Bow: Natalie de Segonzac

**TITLE
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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2026 - ARRIVAL DAY

5:00 - 7:00 pm **Early Registration & Check-In**
Prefunction

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2026

7:30 – 9:00 am: **Registration & Continental Breakfast – Exhibitor Visits**
Prefunction

9:00 – 9:15 am: **Opening Remarks & Welcome**
Matthew Rodreick | Unite 2 Fight Paralysis

SESSION 1 - Where We've Been

9:15 - 9:30 am: **A Seat at the Table**
Marilyn Smith | Unite 2 Fight Paralysis (retired)

9:30 - 9:45 am: **A Research Lens**
Lyn Jakeman, PhD | National Institutes of Health (retired)

9:45 – 10:00 am: **35 Years of Change in Spinal Cord Injury Care: Reflections
on Progress, Purpose, and Hope**
Steve Kirshblum, MD | Kessler Institute

10:00 - 10:30 am: **Panel Discussion with Question & Answer Session**

10:30 - 11:00 am: **Break - Exhibitor Visits**

SESSION 2 - What We've Learned

11:00 - 11:15 am: **Enhancing Recovery After Spinal Cord Injury: Drugs,
Biologics, and Neurotechnology**
James Guest, MD, PhD, FAANS | The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis

11:15 - 11:30 am: **Then and Now, Learning from Each Other**
Naomi Kleitman, PhD | The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation

11:30 - 11:45 pm: **Meeting Science Halfway: A Life Lived While Waiting for a Cure**
Josh Basile | Determined 2 Heal

11:45 - 12:15 pm: **Panel Discussion with Question & Answer Session**



12:15 – 1:15 pm: **Lunch - Exhibitor Visits**
Talk: A Remembrance of John McDonald by Cristina Sadowsky, MD

SESSION 3 - Where We Are

1:15 - 1:30 pm: **Rewiring the Spinal Cord: Progress Toward Functional Circuit Replacement**
Philip Horner, MD, PhD | Houston Methodist Research Institute

1:30 – 1:45 pm: **The Winding Road: Trends in Spinal Cord Injury Research Over the Last 15 Years**
Jen Dulin, PhD | Texas A&M University

1:45 - 2:00 pm: **Building Local SCI Data Power Across the United States: How Community Organizations Can Use Medical Claims & Public Health Data to Transform SCI Advocacy**
West Livaudais, MPH | Oregon Spinal Cord Injury Connection (OSCI)

2:00 - 2:30 pm: **Panel Discussion and Question & Answer Session**

2:30 - 3:00 pm: **Break - Exhibitor Visits**

SESSION 4 - Where We Are: Industry Perspective

3:00 - 3:45 pm: **Emerging Spinal Cord Stimulation Strategies**
Katie Velez | ANEUVO
Parag Gad, PhD | SpineX
Sean Sciara, MBA | ONWARD Medical
Moderator: Becca Martin PT, PhD | Kennedy Krieger Institute

3:45 - 4:30 pm: **Emerging Therapies with Challenges and Opportunities for the Future**
Adam Rogers, MD | NervGen Pharma
Keith Tansey, MD, PhD, FASNR, FASIA | Lifeward
Kristen Gill, OTD, OTR/L, CPAM | Food & Drug Administration

5:00 - 7:00 pm: **Networking Reception**
With a Remembrance and Toast for Jerry Silver, PhD

Dinner on your own

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2026

7:30 – 9:00 am: **Registration & Continental Breakfast – Exhibitor Visits**
Prefunction

9:00 - 9:15am: **Opening Remarks**
Matthew Rodreick | Unite 2 Fight Paralysis

SESSION 5 - What Needs To Change

9:15 - 9:30 am: **From Surviving to Thriving: What Gets Us There?**
Kim Anderson-Erisman, PhD | Case Western Reserve University

9:30 - 9:45 am: **Re-Engineering the Standard of Care as a Needed Approach to Treat Spinal Cord Injury**
Andrew N. Stewart, PhD | University of Kentucky

9:45 - 10:00 am: **Advancing Spinal Cord Injury Research Amidst the Current U.S. Healthcare Landscape: Beyond the Ramp**
Camilo Castillo, MD, MBA | University of Louisville

10:00 - 10:30 am: **Panel Discussion with Question & Answer Session**

10:30 - 11:00 am: **Break - Exhibitor Visits**

SESSION 6 - Where Are We Going? (Combinatorial Therapies)

11:00 - 11:15 am: **Combinatorial Approaches for SCI: How Do We Achieve Breakthrough Recovery?**
Monica Perez, PT, PhD | Shirley Ryan Ability Lab

11:15 - 11:30 pm: **Better Together - Decentralized Biorepositories Accelerating Translational Research in Spinal Cord Injury**
Andrew Park, MD | Craig Hospital

11:30 - 11:45 pm: **Moving Forward with AI and Health Data**
Abel Torres Espin, PhD | University of Waterloo

11:45 - 12:15 pm: **Panel Discussion with Question & Answer Session**

12:15 – 1:15 pm: **Lunch - Exhibitor Visits**
Talk: From Action to Impact - Advancing Alzheimer's Policy
Rachel Conant, MS | Alzheimer's Association

1:15 – 2:00 pm: **Poster Session**

SESSION 7 - How Do We Get There Together?

2:00 - 2:15 pm: **How Do We Get There? Together**
Jason Stoffer | Unite 2 Fight Paralysis

2:15 - 2:30 pm: **Making Neuromodulation Personal Through Spinal Physiology**
David Darrow, MD, PhD | University of Minnesota

2:30 - 2:45 pm: **SCI Ventures – A Mission-Driven Venture Fund Accelerating Therapies in SCI**
Adrien Cohen | SCI Ventures

2:45 – 3:00 pm: **Hope and Trust? Perspectives from an Anomaly in Translational SCI Research**
Alexander 'Sasha' Rabchevsky, PhD | University of Kentucky

3:00 - 3:30 pm: **Panel Discussion and Question & Answer Session**

3:30 - 4:00 pm: **Break - Exhibitor Visits**

SESSION 8 - Moderated Discussion Toward Actionable Strategic Ask

4:00 - 5:30 pm: **Facilitated Discussion**
Jason Stoffer & Jake Beckstrom | U2FP
Stephen Lieberman | United Spinal Association
Sherman Gillums, Jr., EdD | Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Morgan Brown | Paralyzed Veterans of America
Emily Arneson | Kennedy Krieger Institute

5:30 - 5:45 pm: **WRAP UP**

END OF CONFERENCE

Prepare for Roll on the Capital (Tuesday, February 17, 2026)!



PRESENTER PROFILES

Scan here to view our speaker line-up. Then click on a speaker's name or image to access their abstract and bio.



CONFERENCE TIPS

SPONSOR EXHIBITORS

Our sponsors help make U2FP's Annual Symposium possible - they also provide a tremendous array of resources, services and products for the SCI Community. Sponsors will be available at several exhibit tables in the Prefunction area outside of the Ballroom. Please take a moment to stop by and learn more about their unique offerings for our community.

GET CONNECTED

Network: Renaissance_Conference

Passcode: U2FP2026



X (formerly Twitter): @U2FP_CureSCI



Facebook: Unite2FightParalysis



Instagram: @u2fp



LinkedIn: company/unite-2-fight-paralysis



TikTok: @unite2fightparalysis

A WELCOMING SPACE

Unite 2 Fight Paralysis is committed to creating a welcoming and accessible event. We seek to create an environment where everyone feels encouraged to participate. Please let us know if you need any accommodations. Help us nurture a space where we all feel included and where civility grows. Please let the U2FP staff know if you hear or see anything that needs our attention. Thank you!



Scan here to fill out our conference survey.



Scan here to download a digital version of this program.



Scan here to learn more about the origins of Unite 2 Fight Paralysis, our current staff and board members, as well as the services of our Scientific Advisory Board.

Photo credit: Samantha Troyer



POSTER SESSION

LISTED ALPHABETICAL BY PRESENTER'S LAST NAME

Neuroimmune Mechanisms of Male Infertility after Spinal Cord Injury

Akram Esfandani

Texas A&M University - College Station

Preliminary Findings on the Role of Testosterone in Neurophysiological and Autonomic Function in Men with Chronic Spinal Cord Injury

Jacob A. Goldsmith, PhD

James J. Peters VA Medical Center & Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Effects of A Single Bout of High-Intensity Interval Exercise on Cognitive and Cerebrovascular Functions in People with Spinal Cord Injury

Wenjie Ji

James J Peters VA Medical Center (Spinal Cord Damage Research Center), Bronx New York; the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (Department of Rehabilitation and Human Performance), New York, NY

Exploring Respiratory Outcomes for SCI Participants in a Community-based Exercise Program

Nicholas Latterell, MS

Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, ABLE Program

Sex and Income Level Influence Heavy Episodic Alcohol Use after Spinal Cord Injury

Alexa Lauinger

Carle Illinois College of Medicine

Transcutaneous Spinal Neuromodulation Combined with Constraint-Induced, Task-Specific Training Restores Sensorimotor and Autonomic Function After 12 Years of Clinically Complete Spinal Cord Injury

Ignacio Montoya

Georgia Institute of Technology

Example Methodology for Distinguishing which Individuals Do or Don't Respond to Rehabilitation Interventions after SCI: An Exploratory Analysis

Tommy W. Sutor, MS, PhD

James J Peters VA Medical Center; Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Transcutaneous Spinal Stimulation Drives Upper Extremity Recovery: Findings from a Multicenter RCT in Chronic SCI

Arjun Kumar, OTR/L

TRYAbility NeuroRecovery

RESONATE: Pilot study on engaging with Marc Noël's quantum paintings in peRson and in the mEtaverse for improvementS in mental bOdy represeNtations Affecting sensorimotor funcTion and emotional wEll-being in adults with spinal cord injury

Ann Van de Winckel, PT, MSPT, PhD

Division of Physical Therapy and Rehab Sci,

Department of Fam Medicine and Comm Health, Medical School, University of Minnesota

Cognitive Multisensory Rehabilitation for Sensorimotor Recovery in Adults with Spinal Cord Injury: pilot clinical trial

Ann Van de Winckel, PT, MSPT, PhD

Division of Physical Therapy and Rehab Sci,

Department of Fam Medicine and Comm Health, Medical School, University of Minnesota

Safety, Tolerability, Outcomes of Psilocybin for Depression (STOP Depression) in Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

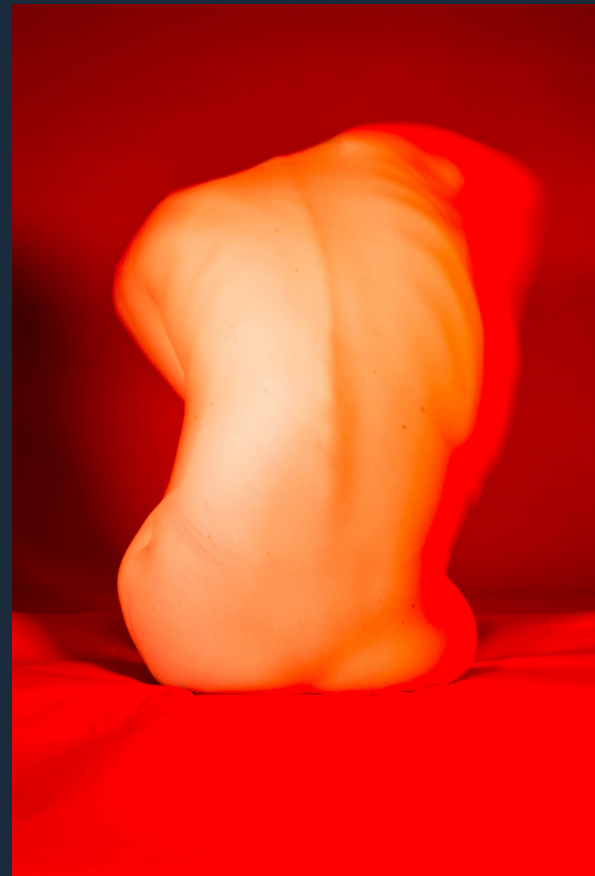
Jill M. Wecht, EdD

James J Peters VA Medical Center, Bronx New York; the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY



FULL POSTER PRESENTATION DETAILS

Scan here to view full Poster presentation details, including abstract and additional authors.



Distortion (Red): Natalie de Segonzac

RESOURCES

Scan here to access our Resources webpage for full details on the information below and direct links to each resource.



Share our Legislative Fact Sheet with your Congressional representatives.



Share our Advocate Fact Sheet with your friends, family and co-workers.



The NASCIC Research Advocacy Course is designed to educate and empower individuals with spinal cord injury, researchers and clinicians, and caregivers who wish to become more involved with Clinical Research relating to SCI at all levels.



The MSKTC works closely with researchers in the 14 Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Model System Centers to develop resources for people living with spinal cord injury and their supporters. These user-friendly resources are grounded in evidence and available in a variety of formats such as printable PDF documents, videos, and slideshows.



The goal of the SCITrialsFinder.net website is to allow individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI), their families and health care professionals to get common language information about clinical trials as developed by experienced clinical investigators.



STEM CELL FACTS is a useful publication for understanding the basics of stem cells. It is put out by the International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR). The ISSCR is an independent, nonprofit organization providing a global forum for stem cell research and regenerative medicine.



SciTrials.org provides the community with a way of finding clinical trials that are relevant to each individual in the fastest way possible by enabling individuals to search via location and injury details; receive email updates on new trials of interest to them; find answers for the most common questions about trials; access clinical information distilled into everyday language; apply to clinical trials quickly and directly in the web site.



This data sheet is a quick reference on demographic and condition statuses for 35,675 persons with SCI. Data were collected through 2021 by federally funded SCI Model Systems and five Form II (follow up) centers and entered into the National SCI Database.

ABOUT THE ART

PHOTOGRAPHY SERIES BY NATALIE DE SEGONZAC



Double Me



Mobility Tower



ChairBody 1



Environment (Inside)



Scan here to explore more of Natalie's art.

A miracle delayed is even more miraculous.

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RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Funding Projects to Enhance Life After SCI/D

Supporting Research and Innovation to improve the lives of Veterans and others living with Spinal Cord Injuries and Diseases, their families, caregivers and the medical professionals who serve them.



Research Foundation

- Promoting innovative research to find better treatments and cures for paralysis.
- Supporting efforts to improve the quality of life of individuals with spinal cord dysfunction until treatments are found.
- Training post-doctoral fellow investigators and encourage them to specialize in the area of spinal cord research.

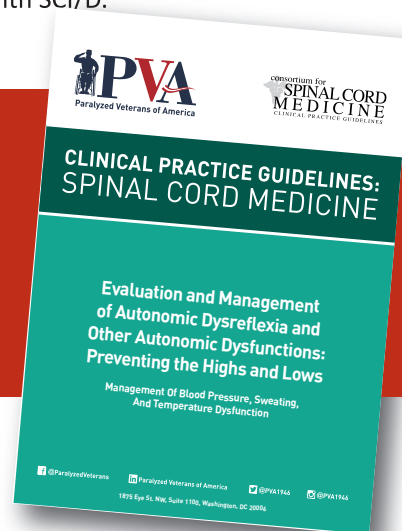


Education Foundation

- Supporting efforts to improve the quality of life of individuals with SCI/D.
- Educating consumers about the consequences and complications of SCI/D.
- Improving the knowledge and skills of health care professionals who serve people with SCI/D.
- Preventing the occurrence of complications for persons with SCI/D.

Clinical Practice Guidelines

Paralyzed Veterans of America works collaboratively with the Consortium on SCI Medicine, a collaboration of representatives from professional and consumer organizations to develop and disseminate evidence based SCI clinical practice guidelines and companion consumer guides. The mission of the Consortium is to improve the health care and quality of life for veterans and others living with SCI.



For more information, contact: foundations@pva.org or 202.416.7639

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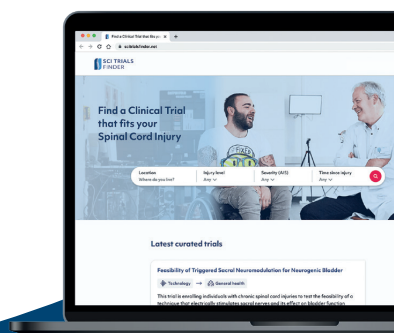




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The Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Research Center (SCoBIRC) is a state-supported research center at the University of Kentucky. Our mission is to promote functional repair of the injured spinal cord and brain through advances in basic and clinical research, collaborative efforts across health-related disciplines, support of patient advocacy, and excellence in education and training.



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SCoBIRC



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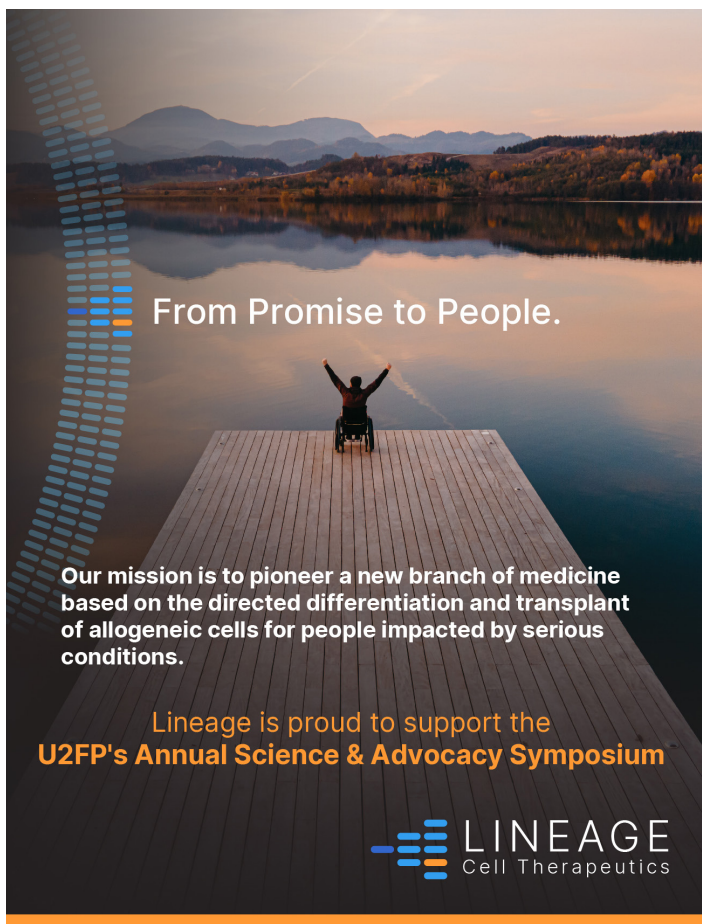


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*The ARC^{EX} System is intended to deliver programmed transcutaneous electrical spinal cord stimulation in conjunction with functional task practice in the clinic and with take-home exercises in the home to improve hand sensation and strength in individuals between 18 and 75 years old that present with a chronic, non-progressive neurological deficit resulting from an incomplete spinal cord injury (C2-C8 inclusive). The ARC^{EX} System is intended to be operated in medical centers by Rehabilitation Professionals and at home by Patients and Persons Providing Assistance to the Patient as needed.

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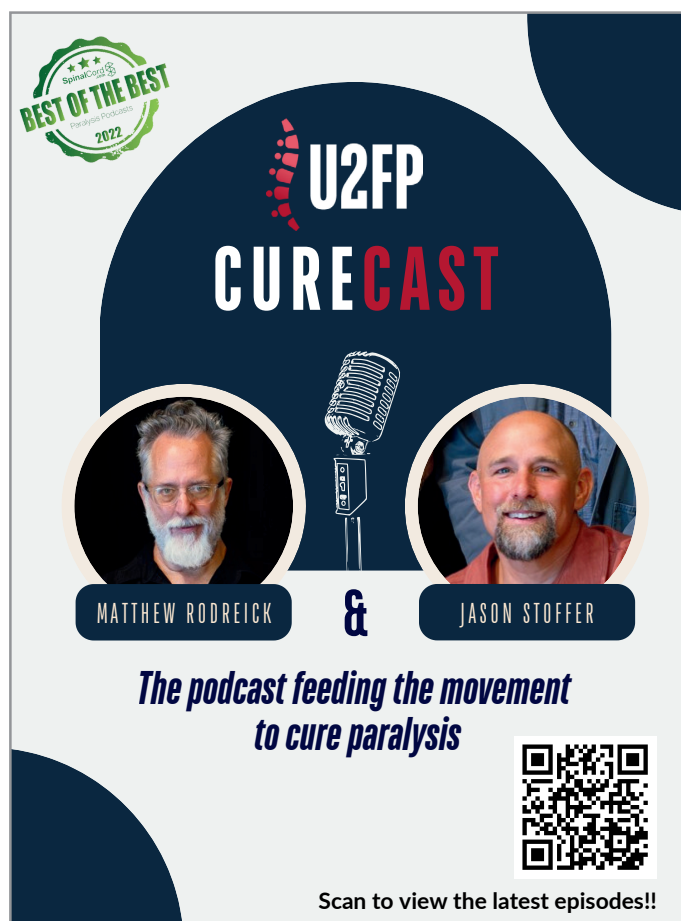


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MATTHEW RODREICK & JASON STOFFER

The podcast feeding the movement to cure paralysis

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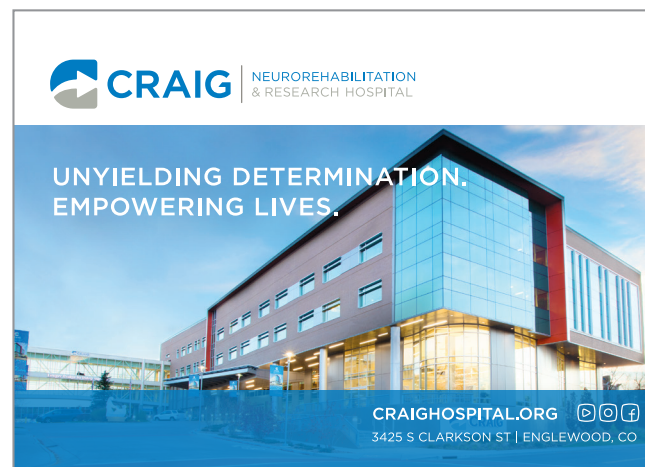


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EVALUATE

Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) Our elite panel of SCI scientists independently evaluates research proposals so funders can be confident in their research investments.



GET PHYSICAL

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ADVOCATE

Cure Advocacy Network (CAN) Over \$41M of SCI Research funding passed in four states over the last eight years. And we're just getting started. All funding awards are chosen by a panel of SCI community members & scientists.



DIVE DEEPER

CureCast Podcast Interviews with SCI scientists and advocates that unpack cure research from the SCI community's point of view.



INNOVATE

Think Tanks U2FP fosters systems change by facilitating three expert groups in the areas of Neuromodulation, Activity Based Therapy, and Translational Practice.