

## **Patient Education Questions 3/18/15**

### **1. How do I accept my Spinal Cord Injury and move on with my life?**

The initial period of adjustment can be hard. Let grieving unfold and then find ways to do things differently. Focus on what you can do and increase and expand yourself.

### **2. I am considering a supra pubic catheter. What are the advantages/disadvantages?**

A suprapubic catheter goes above the penis into the bladder. The reason to get one may be based on difficulty getting a catheter in and out depending on hand function. A suprapubic catheter helps one sleep at night. Keeping your bladder in a normal condition allows you to avoid infection develop and or develop complications such as kidney stones.

### **3. What medications are most commonly used for SCI individuals and for what reasons?**

The prescription of medications for spinal cord injured persons organ based. Medications for the bladder help both storing urine and also help facilitate emptying of the bladder. Medications for the bowel promote regular motility and a formed stool. Metamucil can be used to aide in bowel function. Medications are also used for spasticity to control spasms and avoid injury. Additionally medications help control neuropathic pain. Drug interactions must be considered as medications are added for multiple conditions.

### **4. What services are offered through the SCIU Sexuality Clinic?**

The SCI services "Yes You Can" patient education book has chapters on sexuality. Having a sexual relationship is more than a physical act. Counseling services are offered to help partners discuss sexuality goals. There are medications for erections. There is also a couple counseling therapy which can help you build relationships so that you can establish regular partners.

**5. How Do I obtain medical care when traveling outside the USA, especially if I have no health insurance other than the VA?**

The VA Foreign Medical Program can help you with long term travel or in cases of relocation. The Traveling Vet program can help with domestic and international programs. The best thing to do is to thoroughly prepare in advance of any type of travel local or any distance.

**6. Who gets to stay at the Fisher House or Defenders Lodge and how do you make a reservation?**

The Fisher house is for family is staying at the VA for to support their veteran during a medical stay. There is a 3 night minimum. The defender Lodge is scheduled on a day-to-day basis. Priority is given to Veterans getting medical services at the VA. Family members are not guaranteed a bed except for weekends. To use these facilities a 50 mile distance and or hardship for getting to the VA is applied.

**7. What are the dietary/nutritional factors to help me heal my wound?**

The key to healing wounds is prevention after spinal cord injury. During the first 3-5 years the skin becomes more fragile after injury and also becomes dry. Incontinence can quickly lead to skin breakdown. Hydration is very important and we recommend 8 glasses of fluid a day (This is of course dependent upon the bladder ability). Non-caffeinated and non-alcoholic beverages are highly recommended as they dehydrate our bodies. A balanced diet is key especially one that avoids sugar, salt and too much fat. When a person has a pressure ulcer they need two times as much protein. However the function of the kidneys may change how much protein can be supplemented while trying to heal the pressure ulcer. Limiting foods like rice, potatoes, and junk food is important. If you get a wound it is very important to stay off of it! If you have to get around you should try and limit your time spent sitting or positions that will aggravate the pressure ulcer. Wearing appropriate clothing is important including avoiding heavy jeans with seams and rivets. Soiled cloths can also quickly cause skin

breakdown. Washing the wheelchair cushion seat cover is also very important. Air mattress motors should be working well so that the bed remains properly inflated. The blanch test can be performed by pressing the area for 2 minutes and then watching to see if the color returns. Comparing skin of a similar area on the opposite side of the body can also be used to assess skin integrity.

**8. How do I get to compete/participate in the Summer games and Winter clinic?**

The Summer Games occurred this July in Dallas and the application deadline is April 15. The Winter Sports Clinic occurs in April and the applications are due in November. The upcoming PVA Awareness Fair at the end of April is a great opportunity where one can meet people and learn about sports opportunities for you. The Valor Games also occur in June. Check with your recreational therapist who can both give you information about this opportunities and assist you in filling out applications.