



19 October 2008

Mr Keith Kushner
SPIRIT
Manchester
United Kingdom

Dear Keith

REPORT ON AND THANKS FOR SPIRIT FUNDING FOR DELEGATES TO ISCOS 2008

Firstly, please accept my apologies for not communicating with you earlier. A series of unfortunate events at home have disrupted my schedule and my communication with you has suffered as a result.

We are immensely grateful for the funding made available to us by SPIRIT and would like to ask you to pass our gratitude on to your committee and to your donors.

Raising sufficient funds to stage this meeting and make it affordable for African delegates has been a difficult and frustrating task. Our difficulties have their origins in a number of political, economic and cultural circumstances that have arisen both internationally and nationally over the last 3 years – and which left us in desperate need of assistance to ensure that the people we had originally planned to stage the meeting in South Africa for, actually were able to attend. This made the generous contribution by SPIRIT all the more appreciated by all of us on the SASCA organizing committee.

The meeting itself went off very well. We hosted just over 480 delegates – of whom 300 were visitors to South Africa. We believe that the core scientific programme was on par with previous ISCOS annual scientific meetings and the feedback from delegates was positive in all respects. The SCI course was exceptionally well received by the 150 delegates who attended it. The feedback from the delegates was very positive and since the meeting, we have had further communication with some of the delegates who have already taken some of the course material back to their homes and started pass it on to colleagues. We have now also started to discuss the possibility of using the course material as the basis for a curriculum for SCI courses in the 9 provinces with the Provincial authorities. All in all the meeting was a great success.

Sadly attendance by South African public sector health care workers was disappointing. In previous years we have attracted more than 300 delegates to our National meetings – but for this meeting only registered just over half this number. Promises of support and commitments to ensure delegate attendance from our National Department of Health, the 9 Provincial Departments of Health, our Road Accident Fund and our Workers Compensation Fund failed to materialise on this occasion. We have much work to do from our side in understanding why this happened and what we need to do to overcome the barriers we have encountered. In any event, it sadly meant that we did not achieve the weight of delegates we had looked for and have struggled financially as a result.

We were ultimately able to directly support attendance by 7 delegates with the funds from SPIRIT. I have listed the delegates who we allocated SPIRIT funding to, along with a breakdown of how the funds were used in the table below and then provided a brief summary of each delegate.

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health care workers in the city of the meeting should be able to attend and pulled these 3 in with your funding. We will use them as a bridge into the system in the coming months.

I have asked all 7 to mail you with some personal feedback on their work, their roles and their experience of the meeting. In addition, when I chase them up this week, I will ask them to provide some images wherever possible.

As I have said before, we have a long way to go in developing spinal cord injury in South Africa and in Africa. We need to:

- Develop awareness of the problem.
- Find funding to develop infrastructure and expertise.
- Conscientize our leaders and communities.
- Work towards a national spinal injuries system.

The contribution made by SPIRIT towards the attendance of ISCOS 2008 by these 7 delegates has assisted SASCA in realising the dream of adding "years to life and life to years" for all South Africans and starting towards establishing this dream in Africa. Please pass our profound thanks on to your committee.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized name, possibly "Dr. [Name]".

Dr
Chairperson SASCA & Convenor ISCOS 2008

All of the supported delegates were chosen by a subcommittee who reviewed applications for financial support and then selected these 7 delegates on the basis that:

1. There was a genuine need for financial support to enable participation in the meeting.
2. Each selected delegate is able to pass on their learnings to colleagues and apply them in day to day practice with SCI patients and clients.
3. Preference was given to persons working in under-resourced setting and to those coming from areas where few other delegates had registered.
4. We also looked to support delegates who would be able to participate in the meeting itself and share their experience and knowledge.

The delegates supported were:

Delegate	Home Unit	Supported	Amount
[REDACTED]			
[REDACTED]	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	Accommodation	R 4 943.00
[REDACTED]			
[REDACTED]	Occupational Therapist	Air flight	R 1 400.00
[REDACTED]			
[REDACTED]	King George Spinal Unit	Registration	R 4 788.00
[REDACTED]			
Total			R 32 495.00

[REDACTED] is a senior social worker at the Groote Schuur Acute Spinal injuries unit in Cape Town. She has worked tirelessly in SCI care for over 20 years and was very keen to attend this international meeting, but was not able to afford to do so on her public sector salary.

[REDACTED] is a senior lecturer in the Department of Nursing at the University in Port Elizabeth. He has single handedly raised spinal cord injury care to the attention of the management of our local health care structures. This has resulted in the inception of an informal spinal cord injury task force that hopefully will go on to develop into a proper unit. He was one of the main speakers for the nursing component of the SCI course (the only South African nurse on the faculty) and also would not have been able to attend without your support. Attending the meeting allowed him to make contact with other nurses from the UK, Europe & Australia – which will enhance his ability to continue to develop SCI care and nursing education in our region.

[REDACTED] is an almost-retired and highly experienced OT, who has worked in rural settings in South & Central Africa and evolved many novel solutions for problems encountered by people with SCI in Africa. We were very keen to enlist her expertise in the SCI course, but she was not able to afford the trip to Durban. SASCA sponsored her attendance and we used SPRIT funding for her air ticket. In doing so we made it possible for her to share her ideas and expertise with the therapists who attended the course.

[REDACTED] all work in spinal cord injury care in Durban and nearby Pietermaritzburg – in the KwaZulu Natal public sector health care system. Shockingly their managers failed to make it possible for any health care workers from KwaZulu Natla (the province in which the meeting took place) to attend. We felt it essential that at least 3