

The Spinal Cord Injury Strategy for Alberta

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Executive Summary

Spinal cord injuries are complex and varied, often having significant and lifelong impacts on people's physical and mental health, social well-being, employment and family. Challenges range from the urgency of immediate care and recovery, to living with chronic health conditions well after the initial injury, to dealing with socio-economic changes, to accessing needed resources and supports.

For every individual living with a spinal cord injury, countless more family members, friends, employers and others are also impacted. This means that the consequences and high costs associated with a spinal cord injury can be measured in both dollars and in lives.

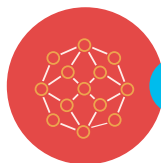
In 2016, people with lived experience of spinal cord injuries and representatives from more than 12 different organizations — comprising researchers, academic institutions, health care professionals and leaders, and government — came together to determine how these diverse people and groups could work together to address the complex issues of spinal cord injury. They recognized that by working as partners and across disciplines, much more could be accomplished than by working independently.

The stakeholder group formalized to become the Spinal Cord Injury Partner Committee and articulated a clear vision: to improve the lives of people living with spinal cord injuries. Its first priority was to develop a provincewide strategy to serve as a roadmap.



Creating a guide for the future: the Spinal Cord Injury Strategy for Alberta

Collaboration lies at the heart of the Spinal Cord Injury Strategy for Alberta, which was built with and will be implemented through partnership. The Strategy will facilitate collaboration and connection among core stakeholders to provide concrete and measurable recommendations, identify clinical and social best practices and services, and support research for innovative medical, technological and social interventions. It articulates three primary goals:



1

Strengthening the spinal cord injury network;



2

Supporting a holistic approach to daily living; and



3

Creating an improved health care experience.



This document will be evaluated and amended as new priorities and recommendations are identified over the long term.

Strategic priorities centre on building capacity, knowledge and integration.

Figure 1 describes the relationship between the Strategy’s priorities and goals which will be accomplished by the key sectors – community, research and health care. At the centre, the focus remains on those living with spinal cord injuries whose lives the Strategy aims to support and improve.

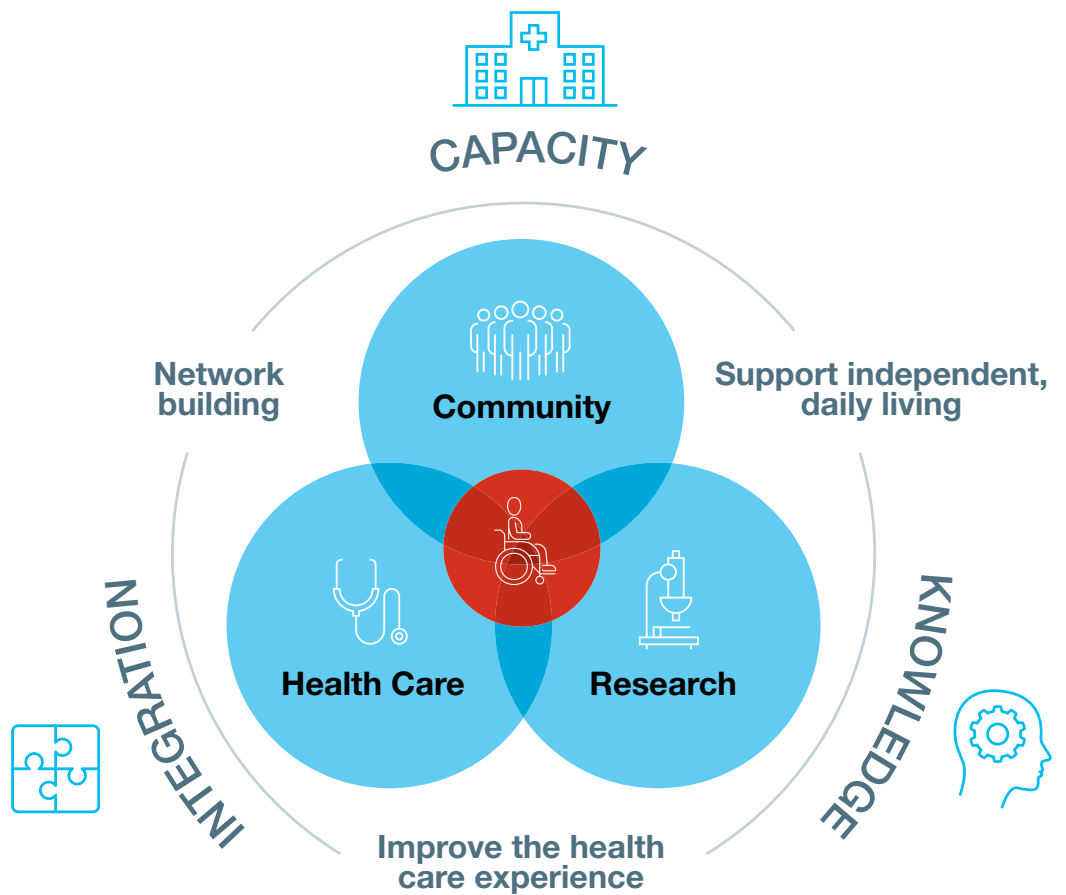


FIGURE 1
Connecting it All Together



Making a difference in lives, families and communities

The Strategy's inclusive and collaborative approach will not only integrate expertise across the community, health care system and research, but also create opportunities for advocacy and for raising the voices of people living with spinal cord injuries. With its emphasis on collaboration, the Strategy will play a pivotal role in improving quality of life by enabling and accelerating the cooperative development of best practices and resources for enhanced recovery, increased independence and active living, and an improved health care experience for Albertans living with spinal cord injuries. Over the short and long term, the Strategy is expected to:

- create greater capacity to develop initiatives to address gaps and challenges in daily living, health care and research. Collaborate on more-informed projects to bolster stakeholders' ability to translate information and treatments for end users;
- build on and better utilize existing knowledge and support the creation and translation of new knowledge from preclinical research to clinical and community-based research; and
- integrate the expertise, resources and knowledge sharing between the core stakeholders to improve the lives of those living with a spinal cord injury

Ultimately, the Spinal Cord Injury Strategy for Alberta is expected to be a major step forward toward improving the lives of people living with a spinal cord injury. Facilitating and supporting initiatives that lead to evidence-based care, resources and treatments will improve daily, independent living and improve the health care experience for Albertans.