

For Immediate Release – May 7, 2026

New Spinal Cord Injury Navigation Service for British Columbia and Yukon

Vancouver, B.C. – Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and the Rick Hansen Foundation are launching a new Spinal Cord Injury Navigation Service (SCI Nav) for people living with spinal cord injury (SCI), their families and caregivers, and clinicians.

Funded and guided by Rick Hansen Foundation, with input from Spinal Cord Injury BC (SCI BC) and support from VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation, the new service is led by a specialized team at [G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre](#) in Vancouver. SCI Nav is designed to improve access to SCI care, reduce complications and hospital readmissions, and support people living with SCI in British Columbia and Yukon.

More than 12,000 people across British Columbia and Yukon live with SCI – a lifelong condition for which there is no cure and numerous complications that impact health, independence and participation.

SCI Nav provides patients, families and caregivers, and clinicians with access to expertise, including advice, training and consultation services from specialists to help navigate treatment, rehabilitation and life with SCI. SCI Nav supports complex SCI related needs, including bowel and bladder management, skin integrity, equipment issues and access to community supports.

SCI Nav has been created in direct response to patient and clinician demand. It is helping to:

- Strengthen SCI understanding and confidence in patients and clinicians;
- Connect patients with the right care and supports early to prevent complications, especially as they transition from hospital to community after rehabilitation; and
- Strengthen clinical capacity in SCI across the province and territory.

“The G.F. Strong team is thrilled to be leading this service innovation and connecting patients and clinicians to the expertise and supports they need,” said Dr. Viet Vu, physiatrist at G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre at Vancouver Coastal Health. “Our inter-disciplinary teams at G.F. Strong have been providing care for people with SCI for more than 75 years, and now we can better extend our reach. We understand the challenges this population faces, and work closely with patients and caregivers to understand how we can help them achieve their goals. Much of this relies on people having access to the right care at the right time.”

In a recent study by Praxis Spinal Cord Institute, access to specialized SCI care was associated with an approximate 50 per cent lower chance of an unplanned hospital readmission for patients within one year after discharge, compared to those who did not receive access.

“Too many people living with spinal cord injury have had to navigate a complex health system largely on their own,” said Doramy Ehling, Chief Executive Officer, Rick Hansen Foundation. “SCI Nav changes that. This is exactly the kind of direct, practical impact the Rick Hansen Foundation exists to support, ensuring that every person affected by SCI in British Columbia, no matter where they live, has access to the expert guidance and care they need.”

An experienced SCI Nav rehabilitation nurse at G.F. Strong triages incoming calls based on urgency and need, working closely with an interdisciplinary care team of specialists: physio and occupational therapists, social worker, and SCI physiatrist.

For individuals living with SCI as well as their families and caregivers, the service provides compassionate patient-centered support in real-time from a knowledgeable health care professional, as a complement to their existing care team. For SCI patients without a primary care practitioner, the team at G.F. Strong provides appropriate support in navigating the health system to help avoid complications related to SCI.

“I developed a urinary tract infection that was initially treated but returned again and again. After seven trips to the Emergency Department and five antibiotics, I was hospitalized with an in-dwelling catheter,” said Anand Kannan, former patient of G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre with a T7 paraplegia. “I then learned about the SCI Nav service. In a matter of days, I reviewed my medical history with the G.F. Strong team and received a recommended further testing and referral to a physiatrist. The service I received from the care team here in the Interior and in Vancouver has been very helpful. I’m happy knowing more supports are available for non-routine care.”

For clinicians, SCI Nav provides free, peer-to-peer clinical support from experts at G.F. Strong through advice, targeted training or a three-way consultation with a patient.

“In November 2025, after 45 years of practice, I began working with my first client with a spinal cord injury, three months post-injury,” said Sue Barnes, Registered Physiotherapist. “I quickly realized I needed to access expertise in this field and contacted SCI Nav. I was immediately provided with resources and within a week, my client and I received calls from a nurse and physiotherapist, and had a video physiotherapy session at her home. Because of SCI Nav, my client is now getting the specialized treatment and advice that she needs.”

Soft launched in Fall 2025, the service is a three-year pilot initially serving G.F. Strong patients and clinicians in rural, remote and First Nations communities with a phased expansion across the province and territory. Primary and emergency care, including medication refills, are not part of the service.

SCI Nav is a free, no-referral service. Patients, caregivers and clinicians can learn more by visiting vch.ca/scinav or contact SCI Nav directly by calling 672-965-1702 or emailing scinav@vch.ca.

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) is committed to delivering exceptional care to 1.25 million people, including the First Nations, Métis and Inuit, within the traditional territories of the Heiltsuk, Kitasoo-Xai'xais, Lil'wat, Musqueam, N'Quatqua, Nuxalk, Samahquam, shíshálh, Skatin, Squamish, Tla'amin, Tsleil-Waututh, Wuikinuxv, and Xa'xtsa. vch.ca

The **Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF)** is a registered charity and legacy of Rick Hansen's Man In Motion World Tour over 40 years ago. It exists to remove barriers and accelerate a global movement toward an accessible, inclusive and healthy world. RHF brings people and organizations together to turn innovative ideas into real-world solutions for everyone, everywhere. RickHansen.com

Since 1957, **Spinal Cord Injury BC (SCI BC)** has been dedicated to helping people with spinal cord injuries and related disabilities and their families, adjust, adapt, and thrive as they deal with a new injury or struggle with the ongoing challenges of living and aging with a physical disability. sci-bc.ca

VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation is the leading charity investing in health care innovation in BC. As Vancouver Coastal Health's primary philanthropic partner, the Foundation raises essential funds for VGH, UBC Hospital, Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute, G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre and Vancouver Community Health Services. Donations fund groundbreaking research, world-class health care teams and life-saving treatments for the most complex cases across the province. vghfoundation.ca

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