



## SPINAL CORD INJURY MODEL SYSTEM

### ABOUT THE SPINAL CORD INJURY MODEL SYSTEM

About 40 years ago, a group of doctors working with patients who had sustained spinal cord injuries contacted the federal government with a request that a special program be started so that individuals who were paralyzed by spinal cord injuries could be treated in specialty hospitals. These doctors felt that if specialty hospitals were named to give this care, patients would receive better treatment and recover more quickly. The doctors also felt that collecting information on all aspects of the care of these individuals would be very important to improving overall care delivery in the future.

As a result, the Spinal Cord Injury Model Systems (SCIMS) program began in the early 1970s. Under the supervision of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), a division of the U.S. Department of Education, applications were peer reviewed and approved from hospitals that wanted to be involved in this program.

SCIMS started with one hospital, and gradually added more over time. In 1982, Shepherd Center applied for, and was granted, model system status. Shepherd Center has had this designation continuously ever since. Starting in 1985, federal funds began to be awarded in five-year blocks, so that hospitals that received the designation as model systems would have enough time to get their work completed.

### WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED TO BE A PART OF THE MODEL SYSTEM?

The elements of the SCIMS program are: Emergency Medical Service, Acute Care, Rehabilitation Care, Psychological Care, and Long-Term Outpatient Care, Primary Injury Prevention, and Clinical Research.

The number of SCIMS hospitals in the United States has varied over the history of the program. At the present time, there are 14 members. Located mostly in large cities, they range from hospitals in the Northeast to the Southeast, Midwest and Northwest. The Shepherd Center program is known as the "Southeastern Regional SCIMS Program." It is one of three hospitals in the Southeast with the designation, and is the largest hospital in the system.

### WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES TO A PATIENT WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY BEING IN A SCIMS HOSPITAL?

There are many advantages. The most important one is that being a SCIMS hospital means that staff members are aware of the most recent developments in both SCI research and care delivery, and practice the highest level of care available. Under the SCIMS umbrella, in addition to having a full range of services from emergency care through long-term outpatient follow-up, a hospital must also be doing significant SCI research and must continuously collect, analyze and report data both on inpatients and outpatients. Periodic reports must be made to NIDRR by the SCIMS facilities to insure that all requirements are being followed.

When a family considers where their injured loved one should be admitted to receive the very best care after a spinal cord injury, a SCIMS hospital, such as Shepherd Center, should be at the top of the list. The SCIMS designation means that the hospital has successfully reached the highest standards of care available in the nation.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Shepherd Center: 404-352-2020

Visit Shepherd Center online at [shepherd.org](http://shepherd.org)