

There are three things I want the Governor and Minnesotans especially Minnesotans with a disability - and esteemed Committee Members to know about the Minnesota SCI TBI Research Grant Program:

1. **It is the brainchild of the people most affected by these injuries.** The advisory council that sets the priorities for funding has 6 of the 13 seats reserved for people from the SCI/TBI communities. This is by design. We in the community know that the best solutions arise when those closest to the injury are at the decision making table.
2. **SCI/TBI community participation is why this government program works exactly as intended: to accelerate discovery to clinical implementation.** Those who live with the injury together with those who research it prioritize and strategize how we can all win. As a result, people with paralysis have been in studies that have restored movement to paralyzed limbs, sexual function, bladder and bowel function and eliminated spasticity...those who live with these impairments know how meaningful these changes can be.
3. **The SCI/TBI Research Grant Program should remain in the Office of Higher Education.** The Governor has said that this program does not reflect the mission of the Office of Higher Education. I do not believe he understands that many of these research projects have included, supported and sometimes been directed by students at virtually every level of education from undergraduate to graduate, medical students, residents, PhD candidates and Post Docs. Supporting these students is exactly the mission of Higher Education.

Please ask Governor Walz to not take away our seat at the table by cutting this effective and vital program.

Matthew Rodreick, Minneapolis. Father to son, Gabriel with a 5th Cervical level injury and Executive Director at Unite 2 Fight Paralysis

For the past 6 years, the State of Minnesota has jumped on board to help advance promising medical research in the SCI and TBI arenas. But now, Governor Walz has decided to defund this crucial program. As one of the leaders in chronic spinal cord injury research, the Spinal Cord Society has known for a long time that a collaborative effort between many interested parties would be necessary for a viable SCI treatment to see the light of day. To lose a strategic partner like the SCI/TBI Program at this point would be devastating to current advancements like E-Stim, which is currently expanding in human trials.

This program needs to continue its mission for so many reasons. And one of the biggest is that E-Stim is on the brink to bust wide open. Researchers world-wide are already refining this technology and making it more user friendly AND less invasive! Just like the injury itself, functional returns are all different- some people get a small amount while others get lots back. The important thing to remember is that EVERYONE, the injured, their families, friends,

medical clinicians, researchers, etc. need to keep up the pressure on demanding change. Think about it, we'd still be driving Model T's if someone didn't WANT something different! No demand, no change.

**Jeff Toby, C5 Injury Oakdale
Spinal Cord Society**

Our organization began as a grassroots effort by individuals directly affected by chronic spinal cord injuries (SCI). Our first mission was to draw attention to the lack of attention given to restoration of function in chronic SCI, and how restoration could significantly decrease the cost of care.

We did this by partnering with the Minnesota Brain Alliance and introducing the SCI/TBI Research Grant Program. The program is working as designed; accelerating scientific discovery to clinical treatment in the state of Minnesota. In addition to the current funding, organizations can and have also donated additional funds, continuing the community effort. To date, the program has funded 36 research projects and our organization has provided additional funding to 2 projects. The program must continue to build on the achievements realized.

**Joe Dailey, C6 Injury Prior Lake
Executive Director Get Up Stand Up 2 Cure Paralysis**

I am a cervical 5-6 level quadriplegic due to a Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) serving in the Marine Corps. I have been in a wheelchair for thirty-eight years and I have been involved with Paralyzed Veterans of America for the past eighteen years. PVA was founded in 1946 by surviving World War 2 SCI veterans. Life expectancy in SCI started to rise with advances in trauma care, penicillin, research in SCI rehabilitative protocols. VA Doctors and willing SCI veterans developed the first specialized rehabilitation methods including, specialized equipment and prosthetics. In Minnesota, the VA continues care and research in both SCI and TBI/polytrauma. The Minneapolis VA SCI/D Center opened 2009 and the Minneapolis Polytrauma Care Center became one of five VA TBI Centers for specialized care. Both programs work closely with researchers from the University of Minnesota and others.

In 2013, advocates from Get Up Stand Up 2 Cure Paralysis asked MN PVA to help advocate for a separate research budget in SCI/TBI where grant money would stay in Minnesota. 2015, Minnesota joined fourteen or so other states that budgeted SCI/TBI research money. There is documented progress in the SCI/TBI research that is going on in Minnesota. Veterans and non-veterans are benefiting directly from the research that is being done here. Do not take away funding and delay the much needed research to reverse the effects from such a traumatic and instantaneous change in lifestyle.

**Todd Kemery C5 Injury Lakeville
President · Paralyzed Veterans of America Minnesota Chapter**