

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST EDITION

It is worth remembering that prior to the end of the Second World War, those who received a spinal cord injury were virtually handed a death sentence. Thanks to the pioneering work of Sir Ludwig Guttmann at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, we are now able to apply a much more positive approach to this devastating injury. All over the world there are Spinal Injuries Units, and Australia is fortunate in having Units in all States, except Tasmania and the Northern Territory. These units are regarded as some of the best in the world. The Spinal Injuries Unit at Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane services the whole of Queensland, and the area north of Coffs Harbour in New South Wales. We also receive referrals from the Northern Territory, and sometimes even from Papua New Guinea.

Unfortunately there is no cure as yet for spinal cord injury. However, much can be done in the way of teaching people to cope with the function they have remaining. The purpose of this handbook is to explain, in simple language, the main problems that are associated with an injury to the spinal cord. Since no two people sustain identical injuries, at best this can only be a book that contains general information. We hope that it will help patients and their relatives and friends to understand more about the problems, and we would welcome any suggestions that you feel may make it more readable or more easily understood.

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