

World Health**Organization**

SEVENTY-THIRD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

Provisional agenda item

A73/XX

International Action on Searching for a Cure for Spinal Cord Injuries and Diseases in the Nervous System

Report by the Secretariat

1. According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), as many as billion people worldwide suffer from disorder in the nervous system such as spinal cord and brain injuries, mental diseases, Alzheimer's disease, MS, ALS, Parkinson's diseases, and epilepsy. About 500,000 people worldwide suffer spinal cord injuries every year. The main causes of such injuries are vehicle accidents, work-related accidents, falls, wars, natural disasters and various forms of violence. The developments of high-tech methods are believed to revolutionise the treatment of spinal cord injury patients. Still there is no cure for paralysis.
2. During the recent decades numerous pioneers and NGOs have been hard at work to get nations around the world to join hands in seeking a cure for many diseases and instances of neural damage. In particular, hopes have been pinned on being able to utilise stem cells to treat and cure certain diseases and injuries. Although these parties have focused on spinal cord injuries, there is a growing understanding of the necessity to see the bigger picture, i.e. the nervous system as a whole. Positive achievements in basic science in the field of neurology will benefit other fields. Attention has been drawn to this by various international bodies such as WHO, the European Council, the Nordic Council and the United Nations in New York.
3. Attention is specifically paid to the fact that that progress in emergency medicine has resulted in greater number of patients surviving accidents, and therefore, a greater number must live with spinal cord injuries as a consequence. Thus, improvements in healthcare services means that those who have suffered a spinal cord injury can expect to have same life expectancy as others. Simultaneously it has been pointed out that there has been significant progress within the medical community in fields such as cancer research and treatment of cardiovascular diseases, which means that patients enjoy a better quality of live than before.

Comparable demands must surely be made for progress in the treatment of spinal cord injury and diseases in the nervous system.

4. The treatment of and research into the areas of spinal cord injury are important aspects in the operation and organisation of every healthcare system. In order to ensure progress in the treatment of spinal cord injury and the development of new, more effective remedies for the benefit of the nervous system, it is important to formulate a realistic future vision for the field and ensure that the tasks are prioritised in the long-term. These tasks are both complicated and difficult and will not be resolved in the space of a few years, and as a result, long-term plans must be made, even for decades, if success comparable to that of other medical fields is to be achieved.

5. The international scientific community has had difficulty in developing medical policies for spinal cord injury, and experts believe that this is because medical science has had limited understanding of the function of the nervous system. Nothing, therefore, would be more useful in the formulation of spinal cord injury medical policy than action intended to increase understanding of the functions of the nervous system.

6. Growing understanding would not just benefit those with spinal cord injury, but also those suffering for other neurological illnesses or injuries. The focus of the scientific community over the coming years therefore needs to be on progress in the treatment and cure of spinal cord injury and other neurological diseases. This would involve using the latest technology – artificial intelligence or AI – to analyse and collate the basic neurological research that has already been carried out on the spinal cord and the brain. Utilization of AI could become the key to analysing and comparing different databases in the field of spinal cord injuries and the nervous system.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

International Action on Searching for a Cure for Spinal Cord Injuries and Diseases in the Nervous System

The Seventy-third World Health Assembly, having considered the report on International Action for a Cure for Spinal Cord Injuries and Diseases in the Nervous System, decided:

- (1) to note the WHO initiative on International Action for a Cure for Spinal Cord Injuries and Diseases in the Nervous System;
- (2) to request the Director-General to report back on the progress of the implementation of the WHO International Action on Searching for a Cure for Spinal cord Injuries and Diseases in the Nervous System to the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in year 2022.

World Health Assembly 2020