On Primary Care and Spinal Cord Injury

We congratulate you on publishing Dr. Ho's excellent article detailing the challenges of providing primary care for people with spinal cord injuries (SCI) ("Primary care for persons with spinal cord injury—not a novel idea but still under-developed").¹ In citing Drs. Milligan and Lee's outpatient clinical model² and the Veterans Administration System's "spoke and hub" philosophy, Dr. Ho cogently argues for an interdisciplinary approach in which we firmly believe.³

Dr. Ho's call for the development of "standardized SCI primary care guidelines," while aspirational, may be premature. One of the frustrations of caring for people with SCI is the appalling lack of outcomes research focusing on even common secondary complications. How can care providers and patients agree upon clinical protocols and treatment expectations without knowing how best to screen for and address the osteoporosis and long bone fractures, obstructive sleep apnea, accelerated atherosclerosis, and impaired glucose tolerance that afflict so many people with SCI?

Until clinicians and researchers begin to substantively interrogate treatments and outcomes for a spate of

prevalent and potentially life-threatening cardio-metabolic complications of chronic SCI, Dr. Ho's vision of standardized and thorough primary care for people living with injuries will remain unaccomplished.

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References

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- 2 Milligan J, Lee J. Enhancing primary care for people with spinal cord injury: more than improving physical accessibility. *J Spinal Cord Med* 2016;39(5):496–9.
- 3 Stillman M, Williams S. It's rough out there for us. *JAMA* 2016;316(6):585–6.