



5640 Alder Rd
Hood River OR 97031

Phone: 888-202-1992
Fax: 888-202-1992
E-Mail: unite@unite2fightparalysis.org
<http://u2fp.org>
Tax ID: 20-3528000

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The Hope for a Cure In Our Lifetime

Paralysis research has never been more promising than it is today. Each year the Unite 2 Fight Paralysis organization brings together the paralysis community to review current research strategies and as a result, inspire advocacy efforts. Through our combined efforts with researchers and advocates from around the world, we know it is not IF survivors of paralysis will experience recovery, but WHEN they will. With many promising paralysis research initiatives moving to the clinical trial stage, it is possible with adequate funding that a cure for paralysis will be found in our lifetime.

The hope this research brings to the paralysis community provides the momentum to unify and push for a cure. Unfortunately, the pool of dollars dedicated to paralysis research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has not been adequate. We appreciate the funding provided to the NIH through the Recovery Act and hope additional funding will follow. It is our hope that the current administration will make funding for medical research a priority and restore the NIH to its rightful place as the world's leader.

The fiscal impact of paralysis in this country is staggering. According to statistics from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, an estimated 5.6 million people live with some form of paralysis, of which 1.2 million have a spinal cord injury. The National Spinal Cord Injury Statistical Center estimates the cost of a spinal cord injury ranges from \$704,344 to over \$3 million for an injury at 25 years old.

Paralysis research has the potential to treat spinal cord injuries, Spina Bifida, Parkinson's, Lou Gehrig's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Transverse Myelitis, brain injuries, Muscular Dystrophy, Cerebral Palsy and numerous other neurological diseases and conditions. It is in our best interest as a country to invest in research, not only to minimize suffering but to reduce the enormous financial burden these conditions place on families and society.

As an organization comprised of individuals who have a spinal cord injury or have a loved one who is injured, we know firsthand that the financial impact of paralysis is overshadowed only by the emotional toll on individuals and their families. At a time when paralysis research is so very promising, we continue to commit ourselves to supporting the dedicated research teams around the country and look for President Obama and every member of Congress to do the same. The research is far too promising to ignore.

Contact:
Donna Sullivan
donna@unite2fightparalysis.org
614-937-8287
U2FP.org