Dr. Nancy Brackett and colleagues, Drs. Charles Lynne, Kim Anderson-Erisman, and Emad Ibrahim, were recently awarded a special grant by the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation (CHNF). One of the grant funding programs sponsored by CHNF involves quality of life Sustainable Impact Projects (SIP). To qualify as a SIP, the project must be innovative, have a high likelihood of impacting the delivery of services and care, and address an important gap in service for individuals living with SCI and their families. The project that was funded is titled “Management of Infertility in Men with SCI: An Educational Program for Practitioners and Clients”.

This is a very important topic as the majority of men with SCI are infertile, 80% of the people living with trauma-induced SCI in the United States are male, and about half of the injuries occur in people between the ages of 16 and 30 who will go on to live many years with their SCI. Hence, many of these individuals will be at or reach a period in their lives during which they want to start a family. Dr. Brackett has spent her career investigating why men with SCI are infertile and contributing factors include ejaculatory dysfunction resulting from damage to the spinal cord and abnormal semen quality. As a result of these problems, couples with a male partner with SCI who are trying to achieve pregnancy are often told that they must undergo invasive and expensive procedures such as in vitro fertilization (IVF).

This sustainable impact project will address the gap in service due to the lack of appropriate resources for the management of infertility in men with SCI. The medical and lay communities are generally unaware that enough motile sperm can often be obtained from a man with SCI in a non-invasive manner (e.g. by vibrostimulation) and that this can allow for the possibility of less invasive and less expensive methods of achieving pregnancy, such as intrauterine insemination or even intravaginal insemination at home. This project will create an educational program to train healthcare providers and educate clients in the topic of management of infertility in men with SCI. The trainees will then become the trainers of others at their institution thereby providing sustainable education. Over time, a standard of care will evolve through repeated usage of proven methods. During the 3 years of the grant, they will go to at least 16 centers to provide hands-on training, they will host at least 20 training workshops at the Miami Project, and conduct 12-16 seminars or webinars for SCI support groups. A website will also be created with information for healthcare providers and clients.

Dr. Brackett and her team created an information guide, titled “Male Fertility Following Spinal Cord Injury: A Guide for Patients”, which is available in hardcopy and pdf formats on the Miami Project website. The first edition of this guide was published in 2000 and the second edition was published in 2011. They will update this booklet as part of this project.

This SIP is expected to impact the quality of life for individuals with spinal cord injury by 1) establishing a standard of care for the management of infertility in men with SCI, 2) training healthcare providers in the optimal methods of semen retrieval in men with SCI, and 3) providing SCI clients with readily available, current information on options for fertility after SCI.

Community Presentation
Sonntag Pavilion
Friday, February 10th | 11:15-11:45 a.m.

To register call 602-406-3067 or email lindsey.possehl@dignityhealth.org.

There is no charge to attend the lecture.

To stay for lunch as part of the 2017 Spinal Cord Injury Symposium the cost is $15.