

EMBARGOED TILL MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2024

PERRY CROSS SPINAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION RAISES \$8.5 MILLION TO ENABLE WORLD-FIRST CLINICAL TRIAL TO CURE PARALYSIS

Gold Coast, Australia – October, 2024 The Perry Cross Spinal Research Foundation (PCSRF), in collaboration with Griffith University, has successfully raised \$8.5 million, paving the way for the launch of a world-first Nerve Bridge Transplantation and Rehabilitation Human Clinical Trial. This milestone signifies a major leap forward in the quest to cure paralysis, offering new hope to millions worldwide.

Led by the highly esteemed neuroscientist Professor James St John, the trial will explore an innovative treatment involving the transplant of the patient's own cells to be surgically implanted into the site of the spinal cord injury to promote the development of new nerve connections. The trial, to launch in October, is made possible through the successful fundraising efforts of Perry Cross AM and his Perry Cross Spinal Research Foundation, and the collective determination of a community united by a shared vision.

Perry Cross AM, who became a C2 ventilated quadriplegic after a rugby accident in 1994, has dedicated his life to finding a cure for paralysis. His commitment and vision have inspired a global community to join the cause.

PCSRF has helped raise \$8.5 million for the clinical trial, including a \$5.4 million direct contribution from the foundation itself. This significant contribution from PCSRF included a \$2 million grant from the Queensland Government through Queensland Health and a \$1 million donation from Nicola & Andrew Forrest. The spinal injury community, dedicated to championing a cure, has also contributed significantly.

The Federal Government's Medical Research Future Fund has also contributed an additional \$6.8 million in funding, which will now double the number of participants from 15 to 30 in this world-first clinical trial.

"We are on the brink of a world first breakthrough that could change countless lives," said Perry Cross. "The journey to this point has been long and challenging, but with the incredible support of Griffith University, many philanthropic partners and our generous community, we have made the impossible possible. The clinical trial is a sign of hope for everyone living with spinal cord injuries around the globe."

The funds raised will support the Nerve Bridge Transplantation and Rehabilitation Human Clinical Trial to be conducted on the Gold Coast, Queensland. Professor James St John, leading the research team at Griffith University, expressed his gratitude for the upcoming trial.

"We are extremely grateful for the support that has made this trial possible," said Professor St John. "This is a critical juncture in our research, and the funds raised will allow us to explore groundbreaking treatments."

“This world-first trial will involve 30 participants with spinal cord injuries, where we use 3D nerve bridges made from the patient’s own nasal olfactory ensheathing cells, which are then integrated into the injured spinal cord. This process helps the nerve cells grow across the injury site.

He further explained, “If we see the cells moving into the spinal cord and generating structural change, then we know the cells have acted and we can monitor communication within the body.

“Whether it be the ability to wiggle fingers, feeling in the toes, slight movement or the ability to walk again, it is all about creating positive, quality-of-life changes within the body.”

Professor St John emphasised, “Every person with a spinal cord injury is different, meaning they may react to treatment differently. Rehab allows the body to re-learn function and movement. Just as infants need to learn mobility skills, this rehab has a similar effect, training the body how to move and develop in a growth-like manner.

“Historically, we’ve viewed a spinal cord injury as an incurable ailment that meant a person spent the rest of their life immobile but through this trial, we are hopeful for life-changing treatment allowing them to move and feel again. The potential impact on the paralysis community is extraordinary,” said Professor St John.

As the Perry Cross Spinal Research Foundation and Griffith University prepare for the upcoming clinical trial, they are seeking applicants with an acquired spinal cord injury to participate. For the full list of participant criteria and to learn more about the application process visit the link: [Spinal cord injury nerve bridge transplantation trial \(griffith.edu.au\)](https://griffith.edu.au/scitrial). There is currently no limit on the number of applicants, but trial places are limited. To learn more about the application process contact: scitrial@griffith.edu.au

As the journey towards a cure continues, the Perry Cross Spinal Research Foundation remains committed to advancing research, raising awareness, and engaging the community in the fight to cure paralysis. The foundation's efforts, in partnership with Griffith University, bring us closer to a future where spinal cord injuries are no longer a life sentence.

For more information or to make a tax-deductible donation, please visit [PCSRF's website](https://www.perrycrossspinalresearchfoundation.org.au).

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About Perry Cross Spinal Research Foundation:

The Perry Cross Spinal Research Foundation is dedicated to facilitating and funding world-class medical research aimed at curing paralysis caused by spinal cord injury and supporting better outcomes for those living with paralysis.