

Active Rehabilitation Services by and for people with disabilities in Poland

Geography and scale: National; Poland

Type of Disability Spinal cord injury/disorder (SCI/D), wheelchair users

Involved actors

- Foundation for Active Rehabilitation (FAR)
- State Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled
- Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Policy

Best practice description

FAR is an organization of persons with disabilities run and supported by persons with SCI/D that offers social and vocational activation programs to persons with SCI/D. FAR works with acute rehabilitation facilities to identify potential program participants and provides:

- Training camps where participants acquire practical daily skills (e.g. wheelchair training, activities of daily living, using transportation)
- Information about living with SCI/D
- Free wheelchair rental for the first year after hospital discharge
- Vocational skills training
- Vocational, social, and psychological counseling.
- Support to the family of persons with SCI/D.

FAR also supports inclusive healthcare by training health professionals on disability issues related to SCI/D from the perspective of persons living with SCI/D and advocacy work. In addition to financing through the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (under the auspices of the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy), selected projects are financed by regional governments (e.g. Lodz), the European Union and the business community (e.g. Toyota).

Origin / impetus for best practice

- The concept of active rehabilitation for person with SCI/D stems from the idea that returning to society was a matter of self-determination of persons with SCI/D and can be achieved through sports and skills training.
- Despite existing guidelines on the healthcare for persons with SCI/D, no national programs for SCI care existed, especially long-term care and for community integration. FAR fills the gap between professional-run healthcare and life in the community.

Impact / results of implementing best practice

- Improved motor function.
- Increased independence.
- Improved quality of life.
- Enhanced social integration and job opportunities with FAR.

Critical success factors for best practice

- Having persons with SCI/D as the program facilitators, staff, and leaders of the organization.
- Collaborating with different sectors for programs, donations, etc.
- Strong connection with rehabilitation hospitals

Impact statement

"Persons with permanent SCI do not require continuous care for the rest of their lives, and do not have to be released from any responsibilities. They need skills which will allow them to regain their self-reliance, self-esteem, and a place in the society. This is where the Foundation for Active Rehabilitation steps in. It teaches people with spinal cord injury how to lead a normal life in a wheelchair, how to fulfil their dreams and achieve the goals they had before the accident."

Lessons learned

- Need to have community-based and funded rehabilitation services.
- Critical connections between acute hospitals and post-rehabilitation programs.

Sources

- [Tederko et al. 2017. People with SCI in Poland](#)
- [Kaminska-Gwozdz et al., 2018. Effect of FAR camps on the QoL of Individuals with SCI.](#)

Further links & information

- Divanoglou, A., Tasiemski, T., Augutis, M. et al. Active Rehabilitation—a community peer-based approach for persons with spinal cord injury: international utilisation of key elements. *Spinal Cord* 55, 545–552 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1038/sc.2017.28>
- [EU Resources on People with Disabilities](#)