

Dear members of the NoSCoS board

I am writing to express my interest in the position of consumer representative. With my experience in SCI rehabilitation, peer mentoring, accessibility advocacy, and community work within the spinal cord injury field, I'd love the chance to help improve the lives of people living with spinal cord injuries.

Background

I was born in 1976 and grew up in Oslo. In 2006 I finished my Bachelor in Social Work and I started working with young people with severe behavioral issues and substance abuse. In 2008 I sustained a complete C6/7 spinal cord injury in a mountain biking accident. At the time I was halfway through my Master's degree in Social Work, which I completed a few years later. My Master's thesis focused on children experiencing that one of their parents sustained a severe spinal cord injury.

Work

Since 2010, I have been employed in a 40% position as a peer consultant at Sunnaas Rehabilitation Hospital. My responsibilities include patient, family, and staff education; wheelchair skills training, transfer and dressing training and informing patients and next of kin about what a life with SCI can look like. I also teach about SCI for medical, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy students. In addition, I have participated in several reference groups in connection with doctoral (PhD) projects and I'm in one of the planning committees for the NoSCoS conference in Oslo 2027. My most important role at the hospital is to be a living proof that life with a spinal cord injury can be meaningful, and that quality of life with a SCI can be as good as it was before injury.

I am also engaged with the Sunnaas Foundation, where I serve as project manager for "Camp MTB Adapt." Furthermore, I have worked as a mentor at more than 30 activity camps, including international and national camps in Barcelona, Lofoten, Hafjell, Trysil, and Oslo. Currently I'm also involved with Sunnaas Foundation and their «Adapt 2 Explore» project. Our mission is to collaborate with the tourism industry to promote accessible destinations and make travel more inclusive.

Additional engagement and interests

In addition to my professional work I serve on the council for people with disabilities in my borough. I also administrate two informational websites: one focusing on travel with a wheelchair (www.rullestolreiser.no) and another on accessible housing and home adaptations (www.funksjonshjemmet.no).

I have been an active wheelchair rugby player for 17 years and I serve on the board of Oslo Wheelchair Rugby club. I'm also a passionate adaptive mountain biker and I advocate for a more inclusive mountain biking arena. A few years ago I organized the first Norwegian Championship in para downhill biking. My last big passion is traveling and in three weeks I'm off to Peru to visit Machu Picchu.

Motivation

Through both my professional work and personal experience, I have developed a strong commitment to improving inclusion, accessibility, and quality of life for people with spinal cord injuries. I strongly believe Spinal Cord Injury rehabilitation is much more than restoring physical function and preventing secondary complications. The primary goal of SCI rehabilitation should always be to empower people to live independent, active, and meaningful lives.

Summary

- Bachelor in child welfare work from Oslo Metropolitan University.
- Master in social work with thesis about kids with parents sustaining a SCI.
- Employee at Sunnaas Rehabilitation hospital since 2010.
- Worked as a mentor on more than 30 active rehabilitation camps.
- Project leader at Sunnaas Foundation for «Camp MTB Adapt».
- Member of the council for people with disabilities in my borough.

Thank you for considering my application. I would be honored to contribute to the work of NoSCoS.

Kind regards

Gunhild Bottolfsen