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Subject: CDC Research Finds Spinal Cord Injury is a Leading Cause of Paralysis in the United States

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CDC Research Finds Spinal Cord Injury is a Leading Cause of Paralysis in the United States

Last month, investigators from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD), partnering with researchers from the University of New Mexico, published an article in the American Journal of Public Health entitled "[Prevalence and Causes of Paralysis- United States, 2013](#)." The article estimated and characterized the number of people living with paralysis in the United States. Support for this project was provided by CDC, the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, and the Administration for Community Living.

Major findings include:

- In 2013, approximately 5.4 million people or 1.7% of the U.S. population was living with paralysis. Of this group, about three-quarters were under age 65, slightly more than half were female, and nearly three-quarters were white;
- The leading causes of paralysis were stroke and spinal cord injury;
- 1 in 4 people with paralysis were college educated yet just over 1 in 6 were employed;
- About two-thirds of people with paralysis were underweight, overweight or obese and almost one-third smoked.

All data from this study came from the 2013 Paralysis Prevalence and Health Disparities Survey (PPHDS).

This paper highlights the importance of better understanding the unique needs and health disparities affecting people living with paralysis. The importance of public health awareness activities, tailored intervention approaches, and ongoing national monitoring of the prevalence, causes, and associated health effects of paralysis are discussed.

NCBDDD is committed to improving the health of people living with disabilities. For more information on the Center's work in this area, visit the [Disability and Health webpage](#) and the [Disability and Health Data System](#) (DHDS). Click [here](#) for a visual summary of health disparities impacting people with disabilities.

September is Spinal Cord Injury Month. For more information from ACL about the [Paralysis Resource Center \(PRC\)](#) and spinal cord injury contact Elizabeth Leef at

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