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TRYGGINGAMÁLARÁÐUNEYTIÐ

*Ministry of Health and Social Security*

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Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland  
Director-General  
World Health Organisation  
CH-1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland

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Dear Madam Director-General,

I would like to start by thanking the World Health Organisation, and especially you, for your support and co-operation in arranging the international conference on *Human Spinal Cord Injury*, held in Reykjavík May 31st - June 2nd 2001.

At the conference many pioneers in the field of spinal cord injury expressed the view that it is becoming very urgent to provide more resources in the search for a more effective treatment and even cure of spinal cord injuries. These injuries are not only frequent among young people but are also a substantial financial burden for the health and social services in most countries.

The lectures and papers presented at the conference in Reykjavík covered many areas concerning the diagnostic and treatment of this serious health problem, including spinal cord injury and human rights, none surgical technique, electrical and orthopaedic advances, treatment possibilities and rehabilitation, surgical approaches, and basic science and research opportunity. Lastly, the feasibility of establishing a health data bank on spinal cord injury was the main subject in the concluding panel discussion.

By the end of the meeting a working group was established to carry on the work and present the results in different context. The members of this working group consider it of a great importance if the World Health Organisation would be able take the initiative in establishing a fund to support different tasks and projects which concern spinal cord injury. The main priorities discussed by the group are as follows:

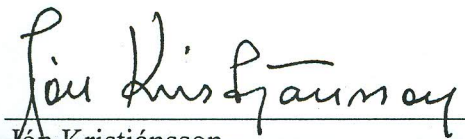
- (1) Establishment of a health data bank on spinal cord injury;
- (2) Supporting doctors and scientists in spreading the knowledge from the laboratories to clinical practice;
- (3) Establishment of an exchange scheme to make it possible for doctors and scientists to visit colleagues in other countries and even work with them on different projects for limited periods only.

An Icelandic member of the Health Committee of the Council of Europe has put forward a proposal to support the establishment of a health data bank by WHO on spinal cord injury. The proposal has been referred to the Health Committee which is now evaluating, in co-operation with the Secretariat of the Council of Europe, how it could support the establishment of such a data bank.

Members of the working group mentioned above have at a meeting with me here in Iceland expressed their wish to visit the WHO headquarters in Geneva and have the opportunity to present to you the main conclusions of the international conference and discuss future tasks. My question, therefore, to you is whether you would have the possibility to receive a small delegation at your office during the next autumn. This delegation would include the initiative taker Mrs. Auður Guðjónsdóttir, who is a surgical nurse by profession, and professor Harry S. Goldsmith, University of Nevada, USA, who acted as a chairman at the conference in Reykjavík, and one or two other delegates.

Please accept, Madam, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jón Kristjánsson', written over a horizontal line.

Jón Kristjánsson,  
Minister of Health and Social Security,  
Iceland.