

TASK: WP-1 CONSUMER RESPONSIVE MOBILITY PRESCRIPTION PROCESS

Investigators: Elaine Trefler, Heather Rushmore

Rationale

Consumers who use manual wheelchairs have expressed the view that their first wheelchair did not meet their personal needs. The purpose of this study is to develop a consumer responsive wheelchair prescription process for first time wheelchair users who are functioning as paraplegics.

Over the past several years, consumer-responsive services have become the highly studied means of providing assistive technology and rehabilitation services. In the past, consumers were not given ample choices nor were they often asked to contribute to the decision making process. Often, all decisions were, and at times still are today, made by the medical/therapy team. Due to the lack of involvement by the consumer, he/she is often dissatisfied with the assistive technology received.

Goals

1. To determine the components of a service delivery process that support consumer satisfaction both with the process and the product during the provision of their first wheelchair.
2. Propose enhancements to the service delivery model based on the findings.

Methods Summary

The following steps were taken to address the above goals:

1. Develop an interview instrument to determine consumer satisfaction with the prescription process for a first time wheelchair user, administer it to at least one individual to obtain input into the areas that need refinement and gather feedback to develop discussion areas and questions for a focus group.
2. Form a focus group to gather ideas on ways to improve the wheelchair prescription process.

Use input from the focus group to further refine the interview instrument.

3. Identify and interview 30 consumers (15 who received services from a multidisciplinary clinical setting and 15 from a non-multidisciplinary setting) with the interview instrument developed to determine consumer satisfaction with service delivery and wheelchair technology.
4. Review current practice based on information and data collected from the focus group and interviews.
5. Develop and propose enhancement to the service delivery model based on the data collected in steps 1-4.

Outcomes Summary

A focus group of five expert wheelchair users was assembled to generate ideas on improving current prescription processes. The group brainstormed 31 ideas and ranked the top six ideas, which were:

1. focus on the person;
2. consumer testing of different wheelchairs;
3. education on different wheelchairs for different activities;
4. evaluation of the consumers home;
5. wheelchair user as a team member; and
6. peer counselor/mentor as part of the team.

Publications were prepared for both consumer and professional publications, which summarized the results of the focus group. The main themes were that consumers wanted to be involved as full partners in the decision making, to be able to try different options in their own environment and access to advice from other wheelchair users.

Recommended Future Research

Based on the above experience we recommend the following areas for further investigation:

1. Investigate effectiveness of education and training methods for consumers. Document consumers' perceptions of training practices and determine compatibility with active practice.
2. Compare consumer's first prescription process to their most recent to determine features and satisfaction level.
3. Investigate the possible differences between satisfaction and adjustment levels of individuals with acquired and congenital disabilities and how this might relate to components of the service delivery process.

Publications

Trefler, E and Rushmore, H. A consumer responsive mobility prescription process: The summary of a focus group. *Team Rehab Report*, June 1997, 41.43.

Trefler, E, Fitzgerald, S, and Rushmore, H. Manual Wheelchair Prescription Process: Consumer Satisfaction with Multidisciplinary and Non Multidisciplinary Approaches, In revision.

