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Conference Abstract

Opportunity for meaningful occupation through powered mobility in old age

Lisbeth Nilsson PhD, Associated to Department of Health Sciences, Division of Occupational Therapy and Gerontology Lund University, Permobil, Sweden

Rosalie Wang PhD, Post Doctoral Trainee, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Correspondence to: *Lisbeth Nilsson*, E-mail: lisbeth.nilsson@med.lu.se

Abstract

Background: The ability to be mobile is empowering and provides opportunities to be active and participate in life. However, old age may be accompanied by decreased physical activity, fatigue, motor impairments, slower reactions, and declining memory. The effects resulting from these executive and bodily transformations may be the need for assistance, or withdrawal from previously preferred arenas for activity and social engagement. Meaningful occupation [1] is considered to be an important factor for an individual's perception of health and well-being. When growing older it is important to remain a person who is believed to hold potential to learn and to keep up abilities by using remaining capacities. If the drive for activity and participation in life is declined there is a risk for occupational deprivation with resignation and alienation as possible consequences [2,3]. If physical limitations restrict walking or use of manual wheelchairs, scooters or powered wheelchairs may be used to enable occupation, empower the user and re-cultivate his/her sense of control. But as shown in the past, provision rules, prioritization of safety, attitudes and routines in care homes may be obstacles for access to or full benefits from powered mobility. New products and approaches [4,5] are necessary to address obstacles and provide opportunities for meaningful occupation through powered mobility in old age. For example, with even partly independent mobility health and wellness may be promoted. Access to community-based services offering power mobility practice and supports may be experienced as empowering; provide increased autonomy; and limit cognitive decline. However this calls both for best practice guidelines and new policies regarding funding and provision of powered mobility equipment for people with declining cognitive capacity.

Objectives: This session will review and elucidate on several areas pertaining to improving opportunities for meaningful occupation through powered mobility use in old age for people with declining cognitive abilities: 1) Implications of growing older with disability and mobility loss 2) Benefits of powered mobility technology for individuals growing older with a disability 3) Learning and re-learning in old age 4) Obstacles for powered mobility access 5) New products and approaches.

Implications: Awareness of the benefits of meaningful occupation and power mobility use, and subsequent improvements in the current practice of power mobility provision for older people with disabilities may result in delayed decline of executive functions; and improved activity and social engagement, which in turn may limit occupational deprivation, injustice and health disparities.

Keywords

older adults, power wheelchair, occupation, employment, disability

Presentation available from the [FICCDAT Growing Older conference site](#)

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