

Meeting postural need in preferred mobility method

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Summary

This poster study looks at an alternative seating solution of custom contoured seating, combined with the angle adjusting features of a powered wheelchair, whilst continuing to address the user's goals of remaining with a manual self-propelling wheelbase.

Aims and objectives

The aim of this poster case study is to challenge a current practice of using powered wheeled mobility for independent positional changes within custom contoured seating.

The study considers the alternatives available to meet the goal of continuing with self-propelling mobility, but also providing tilt and recline within the manual wheelchair, where otherwise a powered chair with its powered tilt and recline features may have been used.

Background

The client was referred to the Regional Posture and Mobility Service (RPMS) in Birmingham for a review of their postural needs relating to the provision of custom contour seating.

The clients goals were that he would like a wheelchair in which he can mobilise independently, and which supports his posture and head in a midline position (or as close to as possible).

The client preferred to continue with a manual self-propel wheelchair, as he did not feel a powered wheelchair would be appropriate for the home environment.

Problems and aims reported:

- Struggling to self-propel current wheelchair now the rims have been set flush to the wheels; can only manage a few feet and then this becomes too effortful
- Home environment has space restrictions with the doorway widths
- The client would like to be able to independently tilt and recline his wheelchair to support posture and pressure management as he spends a lot of time in the wheelchair
- Previous assessments have also identified marked spinal deformities leading to recommendations of custom contouring seating to offer greater support and pressure management

It was agreed to try and address the client's goals of independence using a manual chair, with variable tilt and recline. An assessment was set up to trial a couple of known manual tilt in space chairs that are used around the West Midlands. The strengths and weaknesses of these will be presented.

Discussion

Following assessment, a manual self-propelling chair was identified, and it was agreed to pursue the options of powered tilt and an adjustable contouring back rest to achieve the identified clinical need and the client's goals.

Are postural needs sometimes compromised when provision of a self-propelling wheelchair takes priority?

Or is current practice to look at seating needs over mobility wishes because angle adjustment features are more readily available on powered wheelchairs?

How do we honour the goal for active mobility such as self-propelling and also incorporate good posture support, accommodation and correction?

Should design and market of mobility equipment and seating be widened to adopt all features and practices in all forms of mobility choices?

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