

Ready to Help

Kubrom Haile Posture and Mobility Services, Birmingham

As a newly qualified rehabilitation engineer, July 2015 was a very special month in my career - I attended my first PMG conference!

The intense three days at Leeds University contained several different elements - the industry exhibition, talks by professionals in the field, plus amazing social events, including a Welcome Curry Night and Gala Dinner & After Party. These social events were a great opportunity for me to network and meet new friends, and most of the sessions I attended helped enhance my product knowledge and improve my clinical practice.

On completing my degree course in May 2015, I had said to myself "This is it - I did it - now I am a qualified Rehabilitation Engineer and have reached my destination!" However, after attending the PMG conference I realised that I am only a baby in the field, and I have a lot to learn and accomplish. When I returned home from the conference, I sat down and gave myself time to reflect.

The parallel sessions and free paper presentations were varied and informative. Most of them were focused on clinical practice and equipment choice, with others on policies and procedures. However, I was particularly moved by the presentation from Dave Calver "My O.T. Journey: From Client to Provider". His talk was inspirational. Dave had a cycling accident which resulted in spinal cord injury, but he came back from injury full of energy, gaining a master's degree in occupational therapy and working with different organisations as a healthcare professional. Currently he is working as clinical co-ordinator for United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) Wheels for Humanity, changing the lives of children, teenagers and adults with physical disabilities in developing countries who cannot afford to buy mobility equipment.

It reminded me of the job we do as clinicians, and the big difference we make to our clients' lives to empower them, which is something we sometimes forget. As a healthcare provider, doing his best to improve the lives of vulnerable children and young adults with disability in developing countries, Dave proved to us that once we empower our clients, they can do enormous things in the world: the sky is the limit.

His speech motivated me so much that, when I received my Register for Clinical Technologists (RCT) certificate, I emailed my CV and cover letter to UCP Wheels for Humanity, asking to be part of the Expert Volunteers. Although I am a newly qualified rehabilitation engineer I believe that, with the relevant training/guidance from UCP Wheels for Humanity, I too can contribute something to people with disability and their communities in the developing world. Every little helps!

UCP Wheels for Humanity trains local healthcare professionals to enable them to assess children and young adults and provide them with suitable mobility equipment. I see this as empowering people and communities, echoing the saying "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime."

The World Health Organisation (2006) reported that 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries, and most of them have no access to healthcare services. If we work hard and give a helping hand to reduce it to 40%, then just imagine the transformation in the lives of disabled people and their communities across the world!

Reference

WHO (2006) Promoting access to healthcare services for persons with disabilities [online] available from <http://www.who.int/nmh/donorinfo/vip_promoting_access_healthcare_rehabilitation_update.pdf.pdf> [20 December 2015]