As part of the Posture and Mobility Group (PMG) annual conference programme 2018, PMG offered a training event by the International Society of Wheelchair Professionals (ISWP). The ISWP offer a hybrid training package, based on the World Health Organization's 5-day basic wheelchair service training package. The training includes some online teaching, through both written material and videos, an online assessment and a one day practical training event to further consolidate and put into practice the information learnt online. There was also a follow up assessment after the training day which enabled students to measure their learning and development as a result of the practical training day.

The World Health Organisation reports that less than 5% of those in need have access to a properly fitted wheelchair and that there are limited training opportunities to gain the skills needed to prescribe a wheelchair effectively (World Health Organisation, 2012). The ISWP’s vision is that all people who need wheeled mobility devices receive the appropriate products and service with dignity. Therefore, it is involved in professionalising wheelchair services around the world through training and coordinating services, amongst other things (ISWP, 2018). It was a privilege to access training materials that were used worldwide; this was a unique aspect of the training which broadened the attendee’s clinical reasoning process and understanding of the wheelchair provision process worldwide. For example, the assessment scenarios involved a range of different environments which the student had to consider when selecting and providing justification for a particular wheelchair/seating prescription; had the training been UK specific, the student may not have had the opportunity to consider these types of environments.

The combination of the online learning and the practical day was a fantastic way to consolidate learning, ask questions and clarify any uncertainties with experts in the field. The practical day involved measuring one another for wheelchairs, wheelchair skills practice and working through case study scenarios. The discussion that the case studies initiated further developed clinical reasoning and broadened perspectives, enabling attendees to really consider and justify the ‘why’ of what they would prescribe for a given individual.

The opportunity to develop wheelchair skills was provided by the Back Up Trust (<https://www.backuptrust.org.uk/about-us/our-staff>). The Back Up Trust delivers a range of services, including wheelchair skills training, to build confidence and independence back into people’s lives who have suffered a spinal cord injury (Back Up, 2018). Many of Back Up’s volunteer and staff team have been affected by spinal cord injury, and so have a deep understanding of the day to day reality of living with such an injury. Being trained by individuals who have a spinal cord injury and hearing their stories enabled the attendees to understand more fully how each of the skills being learnt were required daily; be that negotiating the wheelchair round a toy-filled house or ascending/descending curbs and steps. Being able to experience the feel of different wheelchairs, learn how to control the chair in different ways and work out what technique is most appropriate for oneself, depending on the task as well as develop more confidence in using the chair as the session went on was an invaluable experience.

This training course was a rich and varied learning experience which I, as a newly qualified occupational therapist, have benefitted from in so many ways; I am more competent and confident in measuring for a wheelchair, justifying a prescription for a wheelchair and have an experiential understanding of what it feels like to learn wheelchair skills. This course has not only developed my practice competence and confidence, benefitting the clients I work with but it has also broadened my understanding of the worldwide need for properly fitted wheelchairs and training packages such as this.

**References**

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