POSTURAL CARE OUT OF THE CHAIR

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Background

It is well known that postural management for individuals with positioning difficulties is a very difficult challenge. As therapists, we seek to remediate these issues when our clients are in their supportive seating systems. What happens the rest of the time? Let’s take a look at postural management from a 24-hour perspective. We propose an assessment tool to aid in the identification and management of postural habits in individuals with spinal cord injury through a 24-hour lens.

While completing final student clinical placements in a seating clinic at a specialized rehabilitation facility in the Toronto area we became acutely aware of the postural management challenges these clients face. As clinicians, and specifically as Occupational Therapists, we seek to address these challenges in terms of the client’s daily life. With evidence-based research, and a keen clinical eye at the seating clinic, we developed a tool to assess a client’s postural management issues from a 24-hour perspective. The “Postural Habits Assessment Tool” (PHAT) is a proposed assessment, which allows a clinician to systematically evaluate a client’s postural journey through a 24-hour lens. With this snapshot of a client’s day we are then able to identify key areas to focus an intervention plan. A client’s seating system is one of many key areas in which health professionals should be focusing to address postural management issues for our clients. This project and proposed presentation is under the clinical direction of Andree Gauthier, OT Reg. (Ont.).

The PHAT

Development of this assessment tool was prompted by a need identified by Andree Gauthier at the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute Lyndhurst Centre Outpatient Seating Clinic. Posture was repeatedly observed to deteriorate despite best efforts by the healthcare team to implement superior seating systems for persons with spinal cord injuries. The therapists needed a systematic way to identify which habits, if any, were causing the presentation of declining postures. The original intention was to direct intervention strategies as well as involving the client in addressing these postural issues on their own accord throughout their day. The process began with Colleen conducting extensive research as well as consulting with various professionals in the area of addressing postural deformities. She generated a preliminary tool but was unable to determine the clinical utility due to the time restrictions of her student placement. For this reason, Alison continued with the project on her placement the following. She used the tool with approximately a dozen clients in the seating clinic, identifying areas that could be improved or adapted in order to maximize utility. The final product continues to be used by the occupational therapists at the seating clinic; they report it to be helpful to use in cases where the root cause of a postural asymmetry is not easily identified.

References:


**Speaker Bio**

Colleen is a Dalhousie University graduate who is now working in the Toronto area. Her current practice is focused in a rehabilitation facility for individuals who have sustained burns and she also works in the community with adults and older adults in their homes. Her final clinical placement was at a specialized spinal cord rehabilitation facility and it is here she began developing this assessment tool along with her supervisor's clinical expertise. Colleen believes that as Occupational Therapists, we are key team members in addressing postural management issues from a 24-hour perspective.

Alison is a graduate of Dalhousie University and is now working for CBI Home Health in the Norfolk County area. She is currently servicing children in schools and adults in the community. While in school, Alison completed her final full time clinical placement at the Lyndhurst Center in the outpatient-seating clinic. Here, she continued a student project on the development of a postural habits assessment tool that was initiated by Colleen Kuhlmann.