MAPX (MOBILITY AID PERSONALIZATION) - A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON MOBILITY AID USE

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We all do this. We personalize things. We buy leopard-printed seat covers and fuzzy dice for our cars; we display action figures and hang photographs in our office cubby. Over the past few years I've collected stories and images of people who have extended this process of personalization to their wheelchairs, scooters, canes and walkers. I'm learning that people do this for reasons of function - like Dorothy who is a “night owl” so attached a head lamp and tail lights to her motorized wheelchair so she could go out at night, as well as fashion - like James who decorates his scooter with collections of button, pins and key chains he's accumulated from around the world. I'm also learning that this process of customizing mobility devices can have a profound impact on people’s lives by promoting their community mobility and enhancing their overall health and well being. The purpose of The MAPx (Mobility Aid Personalization) Project is to examine this process of mobility aid personalization and its impact on health and well being.

Findings from our research suggest mobility aid personalization - the process of selecting or modifying a mobility aid to suit individual needs and preferences - promotes health by encouraging mobility aid acceptance, increasing activity and social participation, and preserving identity. Emerging from this work is a perspective on mobility aid use and health which suggests that both the process and the final product of mobility aid personalization facilitates aid acceptance, increases device use, and improves health.

The presentation will conclude with a discussion of the implications of MAPx in rehabilitation care, seating services and wheelchair manufacturing and design.

References:


Ipsos Reid (2009) Canadian Senior's Use & Views of Assistive Devices for Mobility.


**Speaker Bio**

Paula is an educator, gerontologist and health researcher committed to promoting the health, happiness and quality of life of older people. Paula is an assistant professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences at Brock University and Affiliate Scientist at Bridgepoint Hospital where she uses innovative and participatory methods to understand and promote community mobility among an aging population. Paula has a PhD in Public Health and a range of national and international research experience but believes most of what she knows that is important she learned from her grandmother.