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The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health provides a Model for Adaptive Seating Interventions for Children with Cerebral Palsy

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Abstract:

Children with severe types of cerebral palsy use adaptive seating systems to encourage function and assist in delaying the development of deformity. These systems are often assessed for and provided by occupational therapists. However, there has been no unifying policy or theoretical basis on which these systems are provided and research evidence is lacking, with studies tending to be small and non-controlled. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (World Health Organisation 2001a, b) aims to establish a common language for clinical practice as well as research, while bringing together the opposing social and medical models of health care delivery. This paper suggests that the ICF model is an ideal theoretical basis for adaptive seating system assessment and provision, given that these systems often conflict between the medical model of reducing or delaying impairment of body functions and structures and the social model of children and families accessing life and environmental situations through mobility and seating equipment. The paper considers all the domains of the ICF with regard to the current literature. It concludes that using the model in the context of providing adaptive seating gives occupational therapists both a powerful tool for communicating with children and families as well as managers and a basis for evaluating practice.

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