



A Qualitative Study Comparing the Experiences of Tilt-in-Space Wheelchair Use and Conventional Wheelchair Use by Clients Severely Disabled with Multiple Sclerosis

Authors: Dewey A.; Rice-Oxley M.; Dean T.

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Abstract:

The aim of this study was to explore and compare the experiences of tilt-in-space wheelchair use and conventional wheelchair use in severely disabled clients with multiple sclerosis and significant spasticity.

The research design was a descriptive qualitative approach, using in-depth audio-taped interviews in clients' homes carried out over a 9-month period. A total of 23 clients (7 tilt-in-space wheelchair users and 16 conventional wheelchair users) were recruited from three adjacent district wheelchair services in South-East England. The criteria for recruitment were that the clients were severely disabled with multiple sclerosis, had significant spasticity and were full-time wheelchair users, usually requiring hoisting. Their carers were also interviewed.

The majority of tilt-in-space wheelchair users (6 out of 7) reported that their chairs were comfortable compared with only half of those in conventional wheelchairs (8 out of 16). The positive aspects of tilt-in-space wheelchair provision included comfort, improved postural support, enhanced seating stability, relief of pressure and being able to rest sitting out of bed for prolonged periods, often for more than 6 hours a day. One person reported improved catheter drainage and another reported reduced spasms. The negative aspects of tilt-in-space wheelchairs included their bulky size and lack of manoeuvrability compared with conventional wheelchairs. All the wheelchair users had experienced difficulty with transport and many had relied on family and friends to help with the purchase of expensive adapted vehicles. In conclusion, the majority of the tilt-in-space users were satisfied with their wheelchair, particularly in terms of comfort.

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