

IS EMPOWERING INDOOR-OUTDOOR MOBILITY MEDICALLY NECESSARY?

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Magic
MOBILITY
PROUD SPONSOR



33rd ISS
Be Empowered
2017 International Seating Symposium

DISCLOSURE

Primary presenter – Jill Barnett

- General Manager of Magic Mobility

Co Presenter – Ron Porter

- No conflicts to disclose
 - Costs to travel to ISS 2017 paid by Magic Mobility

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VIEWS FROM THE CHAIR

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A platform for powerchair users to speak out about their needs and issues around public funding

VISION

- More people access funding and support to get the right wheelchair they need to live the life they choose

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IS EMPOWERING INDOOR-OUTDOOR MOBILITY MEDICALLY NECESSARY?

- Asked Tom Lowell and his OT Ron Porter to explain their story
- Employed experts to help develop the case study
 - Dr Rachael Schmidt – OT, PhD – literature search
 - Angus Kinnaird – BA (Psych) – interviews and write-up

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Prescribing therapists and funders need to consider mental health to assess the medical necessity of indoor-outdoor wheelchairs.

RON PORTER, OT

- 10 years specialising in ALS patients in Washington State
- Now at a community hospital in Arizona

Boxed in by “use in the home” focus

- Narrow, physical frame of reference
- Whole of life mobility affects mental and physical health
- Empowering meaningful occupations outside of the home may be necessary to avoid occupational deprivation in the home

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TOM LOWELL

- 51 year old husband and father
- Life-long outdoorsman, worked in outdoor recreational equipment sales
- Diagnosed with ALS 4 years ago
- Initially self-funded a good indoor powerchair
- Medicare funding for an indoor-outdoor powerchair justified to enable safe movement in and out of home for medical treatment
- Access to the outdoor environments has positively transformed Tom’s mental health



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TOM LOWELL INTERVIEW - VERBATIM

My name is Tom Lowell. I'm 51 years old.

Before I was diagnosed with ALS my family and I lived a busy life outside, enjoying the rivers and the mountains. White water kayaking. Mountain biking. Camping. Just getting out and enjoying the outdoors and the mountains.

[GOING OUTDOORS IN AN INDOOR CHAIR]

After I was diagnosed with ALS I had the mindset that I would not stop doing the things I loved to do, and being with the people I loved to be with, doing the things they liked to do. I was still getting out and about. But it wasn't long before the confines of a normal wheelchair were too restricting

A normal wheelchair beats you up too much, when you're bouncing around on the gravel on the trails and the paths. As an ALS patient, you lose core strength and you're unable to anticipate the bumps and move your body accordingly. So you get really beat up and it's very fatiguing. So you end up staying inside all the time.

[HOW IT MADE TOM FEEL]

The lack of an outdoor wheelchair greatly affected my life.

I was getting cabin fever by not getting out and about with my friends and family.

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TOM LOWELL INTERVIEW - VERBATIM, CONTINUED

...it really gets depressing, and there just becomes no real point in getting out of bed in the morning when you can't get out and see your friends and go to the places you want to go. You're just left to endure the relentless disease, and not move around at all.

[THE DIFFERENCE AN INDOOR-OUTDOOR CHAIR HAS MADE]

With the off-road, all terrain V6 AT it's a softer, pusher ride and you don't feel the bumps like that. It takes the bumps for you. ...

I was able to take it up on the mountain on Saturday and Sunday and do some trail riding, and then on Monday it was still manoeuvrable enough to take it into a corporate setting and then on Tuesday I could take it to the medical facility...

The emotional difference since taking delivery of the V6 AT has been night and day...

When you're out, beating your way through the back woods on your V6 AT you're totally in the moment, and your presence of mind, your awareness of your surroundings, it's fully rejuvenating for your spirit and your soul. You really feel like you've been somewhere, you've experienced something. You look back on your day with fondness, and you've made some great memories. It's just that you have a sense of accomplishment.

So the difference is; you don't feel like you're dying, you feel like you're still living."

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OCCUPATIONAL DEPRIVATION IS A MEDICAL RISK

- Lack of I-O powerchair limited opportunity for meaningful occupation, leading to home 'entrapment' and depression
- Indoor-outdoor powerchair enabled occupational fulfilment
 - e.g. visiting parks, family outings, community fairs, etc.
- Meaningful occupation lead to improved mental health
 - regained a sense of purpose and personal achievement
 - vastly improved QOL and probably extended life expectancy
 - reduced caregiver burden and improved family wellbeing

If not for home access issue, mental health would have been the only rationale to fund Tom's indoor-outdoor powerchair

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OUTDOOR MOBILITY CAN SAVE COSTS

Social principles vs Limited resources

- Wheelchair accessibility laws vs Medicare funding rules

How funding an indoor-outdoor powerchair could save costs in the long run:

- Avoid risk of damage to indoor powerchairs or medical costs of user injury when inappropriately used for outdoor activities
- Minimise costs for mental health treatment or family counselling associated with occupational deprivation
- Minimise need for attendant care or specialist support to manage medically necessary activities outside the home

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LITERATURE REVIEW

- No direct evidence for mental health risks of occupational deprivation due to limited indoor-outdoor mobility

but....

- Appropriate provision of indoor-outdoor powerchairs significantly improves mobility, quality of life and experience of pain and discomfort Davies 2003
- Appropriate powered mobility positively transforms lives, enables physical and social participation in communities Evans 2000, Hardy 2004, Schmidt 2014, Chan & Chan 2007
- Occupational deprivation is aligned to poor health outcomes, including poorer mental health Wiilcock 2006, Whiteford 2010,
- Elevated depression leads to poorer health and reduced life expectancy in ALS patients Thakore & Piroo 2016

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Occupational
Therapy Australia

Health and wellbeing depend upon being able to engage in occupations that are meaningful and of one's choosing and this is well evidenced by international research. Conversely, being prevented from engaging in meaningful occupations can lead to psychological and physical illness, impairment, and reduced productivity.

POSITION PAPER:
Occupational
deprivation

More research is needed to identify cases of potential occupational deprivation where indoor-outdoor powerchairs are medically necessary

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THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR FUTURE PRESCRIPTIONS

- Is my client likely to experience occupational deprivation without funding for an indoor-outdoor powerchair?
- Could the extra cost of indoor-outdoor powerchair provision be justified by potential savings on chair repairs, medical and assistive care over time?

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WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

- Download letter to send to your Senator
 - ✉ www.magicmobility.com.au/vftc-io-powerchair-funding
 - available to download from 1 March 2017
- Raise need for more research with local AOTA representatives
- Encourage users to volunteer for participation in case-study research via Views from the Chair
- Contribute your own views or get involved in making the case:
 - ✉ www.magicmobility.com.au/views-from-the-chair-get-involved
 - in www.linkedin.com/company/views-from-the-chair
 - f www.facebook.com/viewsfromthechair

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