



Increasing Wheelchair Provision Education in University Curricula of Rehabilitation Professionals

Concept Note

Overview

The High Level meeting on 7th February 2017 will introduce participants to the *International Society of Wheelchair Professionals (ISWP)*¹ and provide a forum to identify strategies for WCPT, ISPO and WFOT to increase access to education related to wheelchair provision within the curricula of rehabilitation professionals. The ultimate goal of which is to improve access to appropriate wheelchairs so that people with disabilities have access to products and services in accordance with Article 20 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Background

An estimated 70 million people with disabilities need wheelchairs, 20 million of whom do not have one. Further, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that only 5-15% of those in low and middle income countries have the device they need. Reasons for this crisis are multifaceted, but one of the key reasons for this is a significant lack of trained professionals able to provide wheelchairs.

To help address this, WHO proposed a comprehensive wheelchair provision model which includes 8 steps² to provide people with disabilities access to appropriate wheelchair service regardless of resource setting to contribute towards the goal of universal health coverage and 'Leaving no one behind'³. Further, WHO has launched a range of resources to support professionalization of the wheelchair sector, including the Wheelchair Service Training Packages (WSTP) designed to educate service providers (WSTP-basic and WSTP-intermediate), managers and other stakeholders. ISWP and partners continue to expand upon the range of resources, including a hybrid course, which is a blended course offering both in-person and online training modules based on the WSTP-basic. A standardized competency assessment, '*The Wheelchair Service Provision Basic Test*' is now also available and will be followed by the Intermediate competency assessment, which will be launched in 2017. One of ISWP's aims is to raise awareness of and facilitate the integration of the comprehensive wheelchair provision model into professional rehabilitation education programs around the world. These resources are valuable tools to facilitate this.

¹ See section on page 2 for more details on ISWP

² Wheelchair service provision is the process through which an individual receives an appropriate wheelchair. The World Health Organization Guidelines on the provision of manual wheelchairs in less resourced settings has identified 8 steps that are fundamental in this process:

1. Referral and appointment
2. Assessment
3. Prescription
4. Product Preparation
5. Funding and ordering
6. Fitting
7. User Training
8. Follow up, Repairs and Maintenance

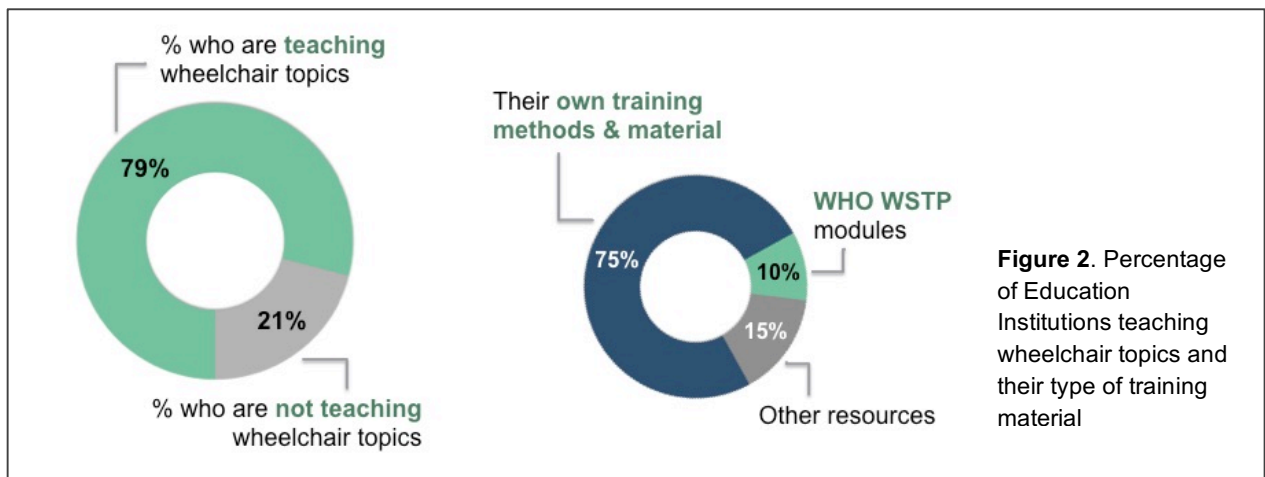
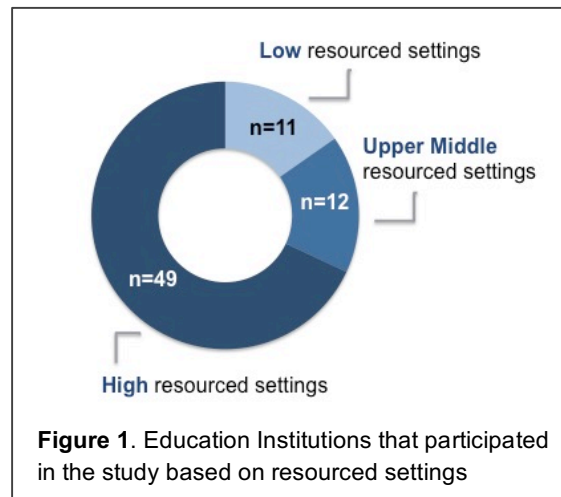
³ <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/leaving-no-one-behind>

Introduction to ISWP and Integration Sub-Committee

The International Society of Wheelchair Professionals (ISWP) was formed in 2015 with support from USAID and housed in the University of Pittsburgh’s Department of Rehabilitation Sciences. One of ISWP’s key objectives is to ensure more people in need of wheelchairs are provided with properly fitted wheelchairs through competent training and delivery. To enable this, a committee of experienced stakeholders across the globe has formed to focus on promoting the integration of training materials on wheelchair service provision in the curriculum of rehabilitation professional education programs (including occupational therapy, physical therapy, prosthetics and orthotics, and community-based rehabilitation). This committee aims to understand the global current standard of education, and barriers and facilitators to this education, as well as develop resources, gather existing resources and share resources in order to promote improved wheelchair service education in educational institutions worldwide.

As a first step to understanding the current situation, the committee conducted a global survey to assess awareness and current degree of integration at educational and non-educational institutions. It was completed by over 150 respondents from a range of institutions, 72 of which were educational institutions (Fig. 1). Results will be shared at the meeting, but some of the highlights of the results from the educational institutions include:

- 79% currently have some form of wheelchair service delivery training - 75% of those courses developed their own training material (Fig. 2);



- The amount of time allocated to wheelchair service delivery training is low - some courses as low as 1 hour;
- Of those who have not already integrated the WSTP, the vast majority are interested in doing so (92%), but most (70%) are not currently working towards integration.



Following the survey, the committee initiated ten in-depth follow-up interviews with a select group of organizations from across professions and contexts. Interviewees represented organizations, which could share experience of integrating or attempting to integrate some or all of the 8 steps. Recognizing that the 8 steps of wheelchair provision are context-dependent and profession-dependent, the interviews, when completed, will aid in identifying the factors influencing content and methodology choices and will highlight barriers to and supports needed for implementation. Results from these interviews will be shared during the meeting in February.

ISWP is also working with a number of 'integration pilot sites'⁴ to encourage educational institutions to include or enhance wheelchair content in their courses and to use globally available resources as appropriate. Through this process ISWP is gathering, and developing resources, approaches, case studies and example curricula which can be included in an 'integration toolkit' for future use by other educational institutions.

Objectives of High Level Meeting, 7th February

In this meeting, we aim to understand each organization's priorities, position on this topic and scope of influence. This will help to develop a common understanding of the potential of collaboration. Furthermore, the meeting will allow ISWP to share existing resources available to support integration efforts as well as share findings from the Integration sub-committee activities, outlined below, and will provide space for all organizations to share insights of contextual, professional and educational influencers relevant to moving forward. Key questions to consider will be:

- Is wheelchair provision and the 8 steps in line with your professional scope of practice and what are the geographical and professional differences to be considered?
- What are the professional and educational priorities and considerations, which should influence the approach and strategy developed?
- Do results from ISWP research seem accurate and representative? What other challenges should be considered and how can these be overcome?

Desired outcome of the High Level meeting

To improve access to wheelchairs by people who need them through enhancing the education of relevant professional, midlevel and grassroots health personnel through integration of wheelchair service components into curricula.

⁴ Through various networks and conferences, 14 potential 'pilot sites' from various parts of the world, representing the varied rehabilitation professions, were identified. Institutions were identified based on readiness to integrate new content, methodology or testing mechanism available through ISWP. Joint meetings have been held monthly since August 2016 and these will continue into the first half of 2017 until each institution has implemented and evaluated planned activities.



References

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