
F8: Why Weight Matters

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Learning objectives:

1. The participants will be able to explain how different wheelchair frame style and materials impact the overall weight and efficiency of a wheelchair
2. The participants will be able to explain 3 situations where weight matters when prescribing a manual wheelchair
3. The participants will be able to list 3 accessory options that will reduce overall wheelchair weight by at least 1 pound each
4. The participants will be able to list 3 ways to effect user weight distribution through wheelchair set up to maximize propulsion efficiency.

Session description:

Wheelchair manufacturers often promote having the lightest wheelchairs made of the lightest materials. Does this matter? And, if so how much? Understanding the benefits of a lighter wheelchair is important for the user and anyone involved in the wheelchair industry. The decisions you make when ordering and setting up a wheelchair will impact wheelchair weight and efficiency and can have a significant effect on user function, independence and safety.

There is research evidence which suggests a lighter wheelchair will be easier to propel and clinical practice guidelines support the use of the lightest adjustable wheelchair available for upper limb function preservation. There is also evidence indicating wheelchair non-use among older adults is linked to wheelchair weight and weight impacts the user or caregiver who must lift the wheelchair. Knowing and understanding the evidence-based recommendations for wheelchair weight, configuration and set-up are essential for anyone using, prescribing or selling wheelchairs. Making informed decisions when ordering a wheelchair and selecting components as well as adhering to best practice recommendations during set up can result in big benefits for the user and the caregiver. Understanding of the evidence can help avoid or

minimize common problems, such as wheelchairs, which are difficult to propel, injury to the upper extremities and even wheelchair non-use.

Content references:

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