

Equipment and Mobility with Special Guest Leslie Todd – Part II

Guests: Leslie Todd – Assistive Technology Professional, NuMotion | Kjirsti Myles – Physical Therapist & Purple Team Lead, Pediatric Developmental Therapy

Leslie has worked with speech therapists (STs), although he tends to work more frequently with physical therapists (PTs) and occupational therapists (OTs). His work with STs mainly consists of working in conjunction with the PT/OT as well as the patient's ST to determine how to mount an alternative communication device to the patient's equipment. Equipment collaboration with STs can also be in regards to positioning for feeding, although he typically works with an OT in regards to this.

A typical pediatric session between an ATP and an OT/PT is usually as follows:

1. The therapist will first identify the need for the patient's everyday routine. Sometimes this requires asking questions about their ADL activities to identify their possible needs. This is not done in one session, but over a number of sessions as the therapist builds rapport with the family and gets to know the patient.
2. The therapist, as they build rapport with the family and patient, determines the family's acceptance level for possibly moving forward with equipment.
3. Once the therapist feels the family is accepting of equipment options the ATP is contacted to schedule a time for the ATP, PT, and family to all be together for an equipment evaluation. Sometimes this can require the patient's OT to also be in the room. This allows there to be a collaborative effort in making the best decision for the patient's needs.
4. Before the equipment evaluation, the therapist(s) and ATP will have a conversation about the patient's needs to determine the best equipment options that should be presented in evaluation. This allows the ATP to know where and where not to take conversation with the family as well as what and what not to present as equipment options to the family and patient.
5. At the equipment evaluation the ATP will introduce himself to the family to first and foremost work towards trying to create some relational connection with the family and patient. The ATP can then steer and/or assist in the conversation about possible equipment options depending on the therapist's level of experience with equipment.
6. Upon completion of the evaluation, the ATP will then create a quote and individualize all the necessary parts for the needed piece of equipment. The therapist will then get this quote for a review in order to go through and itemize and justify each part needed for the letter of medical necessity. This requires the PT to have a strong understanding of the equipment and its individual components. This is typical practice.
 - a. Recommended practice is for the therapist to have pen and paper in hand during the evaluation to take note of each necessary part and its justification. This allows the therapist to take these notes back to go ahead and fill in the letter of medical necessity without having to wait for the proposal.
 - b. When writing the letter of medical necessity (LMN) it is important that you tie everything back to the customer / patient. Everything that is chosen has to be for a clinical need that addresses their mobility related activities of daily living (MRADLs).

The future for equipment looks very promising due to new technologies that have already been and are continuing to develop.

- Carbon fiber has been around for a while, but now they are beginning to experiment with in in wheel chair frames to make chairs lighter and stronger.
- Different types of aluminum and titanium alloys in the frames and well as the geometry of designs will continue to allow chairs to become lighter and stronger as well.
- Motorized equipment is becoming more refined in their capabilities to adjust to the patient's needs.
- The cosmetics of products will continue to become more appealing.
- Technological interfacing will continue to expand to allow patients to interface their consumer electronic equipment (iPhones, Android devices, Bluetooth devices) to their equipment. This interfacing will allow for even more expansion of drive mechanisms for controlling power equipment.

The significant challenge to all of the technological strides forward in the equipment industry is funding from the insurances for the patient's / family's needs.

The three main reasons for seating are for function, comfort, and postural management.

The therapist has to be the driving force for finding the best solution for the patient and family. When the clinician is driven to find a solution it makes everybody better. The family is more engaged, the ATP is more aware of all the needs and goals of the patient, it gives the clinician further experience in equipment throughout the process, as well as makes the clinic as a whole better as the clinician's peers learn from her level drive and experience.

The best ATP's are going to be the individuals with good technical skills, solid communication, the heart of a teacher, dependability, genuine care for the patient, as well as the ability to have challenging conversations in a professional manner. The individual should have, at minimum, the ATP (Assistive Technology Professional) credential and preferably the SMS (Seating and Mobility Specialist) credential. All of these traits and credentials lead to consistently great outcomes for the therapist, ATP, and most importantly the patient.

It's also important to find an ATP that has a good company behind them with the resources and people behind them to support evaluations and other needs.

New PT and OT grads typically come out of school with limited exposure to working with equipment. Some great resources for continuing education as well as exposure to equipment are NuMotion's "Nu Fairs" where therapists can attend an all-day event at little to no cost with speakers sharing on seating and positioning and therapists can receive CEUs (Continuing Education Units). At a Nu Fair all of the major manufacturers are represented as well.

In-services are also a great resource to clinicians that can offer training specific to a clinic's needs and experience level(s).

NuMotion also offers online webinars. Some webinars on demand and some are streaming events only (they have to be viewed live at the time of broadcast).

Remember, when children outgrow equipment remind families to not throw their equipment away. Used equipment can be a resource for having demos in your own clinic as well as possible options for families without funding.

To learn more about NuMotion, you can visit their website at www.numotion.com.