Creating a Sustainable, Effective Assistive Technology and Adaptive Equipment Program for the Spinal Cord Injury Population in a Rehabilitation Setting

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Introduction: Process for Creating an Assistive Technology and Adaptive Equipment Program

- Following a spinal cord injury (SCI), one can be left with feelings of helplessness, isolation, and dependency. Assistive technology and adaptive equipment (AT/AE) can increase a person's ability to engage in meaningful occupations. This can improve quality of life and wellbeing. People can experience a sense of safety, autonomy, and freedom when utilizing AT/AE to compensate for a loss of functional capabilities.

- AT is "any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities."

Client factors to consider:
1. Emotional state and readiness
2. Functional abilities
3. Physical abilities based on neurological level of injury
4. Coping
5. Healing
6. Caregiver role and support
7. Caregiver needs

AT/AE factors to consider:
1. Aesthetics of AT/AE
2. Ease of use
3. Amount of training required
4. Accessibility from different positions
5. Financing for patients to procure items
6. Item availability
7. Cost of item
8. Logistics

Consider primary occupations addressed by your setting: (self-care, home access, driving, leisure, work, school, etc.)

Utilize available resources:
1. Complete AT/AE continuing education courses
2. Attend AT/AE conferences
3. Read evidence-based journals
4. Find a mentor
5. Interview patients and peer mentors
6. Reach out to other facilities
7. Obtain ATP certification

Staff and patient homegrown satisfaction surveys
- Evaluate staff and patient satisfaction of AT/AE
- Identify areas for improvement

3. Program Evaluation

1. Determine ongoing funding for AT/AE
2. Identify reimbursable versus single item
3. Identify priorities versus wish list items
4. Create workflow for simple ordering

4. Develop process for AT/AE distribution

1. Patient evaluation
2. Sign AT/AE out from lab
3. Perform weekly measurement
4. Track patient discharge dates
5. Assign person responsible for pickup
6. AT/AE returned and logged in
7. Weekly AT/AE inventory

5. Program Sustainability

1. Distribution Process: AT/AE
2. Patient evaluation
3. Therapy order in EMR
4. AT/AE is either returned and logged in
5. Utilize available resources

6. Program Evaluation

1. Staff and patient homegrown satisfaction surveys
2. Evaluate that cost of program
3. Sustain funding for AT/AE
4. Identify reimbursement opportunities
5. Set SMART goals
6. Material and maintenance
7. Development of AT/AE

7. Additional Recommendations

- Teach patients self-advocacy
- Store AT/AE in transit
- Prevent equipment loss
- Educate patients on needs of a person
- Insurers need to be transparent on difficulties clients might encounter

References