Journal Article Summary

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Facilitating child participation through power mobility. Casey, J., Paleg, G., Livingstone, R. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy, 76 (3), 158-160.*

Introduction: The authors have summarized recent literature regarding early exposure to Power Mobility (PM) for young children, and its effects on development in all domains. They discuss mobility as an underlying ability that enhances occupational performance in play, exploration, autonomy, and participation in everyday activities.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health – Children and Youth (ICF-CY)) and the World Health Organization (WHO) describe activity and participation as the major components of health. Limitations in independent mobility and gross motor impairments are key barriers to children's meaningful participation in daily activities.

Summary: Power Mobility is the most effective means of providing independent mobility to young children, and there is ample research evidence supporting the introduction of power mobility to infants as young as 7 months. Successful use of power wheelchairs can be achieved around 14 months, and competent use by around 20 months. Access to early independent mobility has been shown to have a positive impact on communication and cognitive skills, as well as improvement in play and social skills.

Power mobility continues to be under-used. Parents and therapists may have initial concerns about the use of power mobility, perceiving it as "giving up" on the potential for walking or associating it with a decline in their child's health. Studies of parental attitudes toward PM show that most parents have only positive attitudes after their child experienced the freedom and independence associated with PM. "Readiness" for PM has been contested, and children with more complex cognitive and motor disabilities have been shown to benefit from the exploration of movement and experiences that PM provides. Approaches to PM learning and training range from less structured exploration in natural

environments to extended, structured practice in supported environments, depending upon the child's profile of cognitive and motor ability.

Conclusions: A child's functional participation in daily activities is enhanced by Power Mobility, which can be used as a therapeutic tool within a range of mobility options. Therapists are in a unique position to facilitate positive attitudes and acceptance of PM in very young children with limited mobility options, recognizing it as a means to greater independence and engagement opportunities.