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ABSTRACT

Nursing home and assisted living facility residents who rely on manual wheelchairs as their primary mode of transportation find 'depot' chairs to be problematic in use and comfort. We conducted focus groups with residents and staff to better understand the needs of the elderly user and the problems associated with propulsion and comfort. The problems identified by all groups were similar yet the emphasis varied. Residents were evenly divided on which is more important: comfort or propulsion. Unexpected responses from both groups broadened our perspective on the importance of features and functions of the wheelchair for the elderly and staff.

PARTICIPANTS

98 participants were recruited; users, family members, administrators, nurses, CNA's, and therapists, to participate in the stakeholder needs assessment portion of the project.

Elder wheelchair users and Family Members

- Nursing Home Residents
- Assisted Living Home Residents

Staff (Nurses, Therapists, CNA's and maintenance)

- Nursing Homes
- Assisted Living Facilities

Administrators

- Nursing Home
- Assisted Living Facilities

PROTOCOL

We conducted focus group and surveys to tease out the needs of the different stakeholder groups. Some of the information was expected, but much of the information collected from the administrators did play a major role in how the wheelchair was to be designed and what types of features we could add based on the desired purchase price.

Focus Groups

We conducted focus groups with users, nurses, Therapists, family/caregivers, and the staff at nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Survey Questionnaires

We conducted surveys with nursing home administrators during professional conferences to obtain information regarding purchasing practices and purchasing drivers.

One on one interviews

We conducted one on one interviews during the process to inquire on specific issues various users had.

RESULTS / DISCUSSION

Focus group results gave a clear picture of the needs of both the residents and the staff, which frequently overlapped. The perspective of the staff on residents' need paralleled what the residents said thus demonstrating that the staff understands the residents' experience. Administrators had some specific needs as well.

Propulsion

Comments relating to propulsion were specific and similar among all groups. The 4 main areas commented on were:

Push wheel location

Wheelchair weight

Drive wheels and push rims

Brakes

Method Used to Push Wheelchair

	Hands & Feet	Feet Only	Hands Only	Not Self Propelled	Total
ALF Residents	46%	31%	23%	0%	100%
Nursing Home	50%	33%	8.5%	8.5%	100%

Comfort

Comfort and fit of wheelchair were synonymous. Comfort was related to:

Fit of the chair to their body

Footrests that hold feet in place

Adjustable arm rests

Storage for personal items

Padding on metal parts

Length of time wheelchair is used each day.

	Range	Average
ALF Resident - Hours per day wheelchair use	1 to 10 hrs.	4 hrs.
NH Residents—Hours per day wheelchair use	2 to 17 hrs.	8 hrs.

Pricing

Typical price paid for wheelchairs and the price they would be willing to pay for a new wheelchair.

Typical price paid for a wheelchair: \$150 to \$200.

Price they would be willing to pay: No more than \$400.

They would pay more if the wheelchair offered more features to insure the users safety.

Safety was their number one concern.

Price was much less important than expected, based on survey feedback,