

Book Review Editor

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For this edition we have reviews of three interesting books focused on the rehabilitation of complex problems – two in Neurology and one in Cancer Care. I would like to thank each of the reviewers for their time in sharing their thoughts on these books. If any members are aware of new books which they would like to review, or to have reviewed, please let me know.

Severe and Complex Neurological Disability: Management of the Physical Condition

Pope PM. Elsevier 2007. 284 pages, ISBN 978-0-7506-8825-3

Reviewer: Elaine Toomey, MISC, MSc scholar, Dept of Physiotherapy, University of Limerick.
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This text addresses an underexplored area of neuro-rehabilitation, that of severe and complex neurological disability. The book aims to provide practitioners with effective evidence-based approaches to managing physical function in people with severe neurological impairments. The information is presented as a combination of appraised evidence, clinical reasoning and advice based on clinical experience.

The first four chapters look at the fundamental physics and physiology underlying neurological disability. Chapter 1 gives an overview of biomechanics and body structure and outlines the effects of neurological impairments on these systems. Chapter 2 provides a detailed and straightforward explanation of the development of movement and postural control in a severely disabled population. Chapter 3 takes us through common secondary complications of impairments whilst Chapter 4 describes the manifestations and features that are often observed in profoundly disabled people. As with Chapter 3, evidence-based management strategies are discussed, with an emphasis in Chapter 4 on addressing postural instability in an attempt to manage these features.

Chapter 5 gives a comprehensive step-by-step approach to assessment; a valuable resource as assessing complex neuro-disability can often be a daunting task due to vast and varied impairments. Assessment of outcome is also detailed, introducing measures such as Goal Attainment Scaling.

The middle section of the book; chapters 6 to 9, considers a range of different management options, including supportive postural positioning, customised seating and pharmacological and surgical management. Case histories with useful images are used to demonstrate the application of this knowledge to clinical situations. Of particular interest in Chapter 9 are the detailed evidence-

based guides to hippotherapy and hydrotherapy by contributing authors Christine Bowes and Barbara Cook respectively.

Chapter 10 summarises the overall physical management of the severely disabled person, linking all of the previously addressed aspects to create a basic management regime that is comprehensive and easy to follow. Chapter 11 describes the challenges of evidence-based healthcare in relation to neurological disability, a thought-provoking piece examining the issue of best evidence-based practice in today's healthcare. Chapter 12 concludes with an exploration of the issues around caring for this population. The respective roles of both carers and therapists and their working relationship are discussed.

The approach focused on in this book is not on treating impairments, but on managing the physical condition of the individual. Postural control is emphasised as a key element of management of physical function in this population. The philosophy underpinning the book is to manage function to optimise the overall physical status of the person, by facilitating ability and minimising secondary impairment.

A strong aspect of this book is the clarity of explanations used throughout, in particular those relating to neurological development and biomechanical principles, which can often be somewhat difficult to comprehend and apply to clinical scenarios. This broadens its potential audience to encompass not just health-care professionals, but also formal and informal care providers and students. The knowledge provided is consistently applied to clinical practice scenarios, making it relevant and easily understood. This book is a valuable resource for anyone working in the area of severe and complex neurological disability.