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## **ROLE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SPASTICITY**

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**T**he first step of managing spasticity after eliminating any underlying cause is physical therapy and Occupational Therapy. Oral Medications, Surgical Procedures, Injection of Botulinum Toxin into various muscles and Intrathecal Therapy are all standard arms of treatment for Spasticity.

Spasticity management is a problem-solving approach by the multidisciplinary team (MDT) of specialists. It is essential to identify the purpose of the management goals of the treatment to establish functional gains and improve quality of life as a whole. In many cases, spasticity does not affect function, and the MDT may decide best not to intervene. It is when Spasticity interferes with function or poses as a threat to safety and wellbeing that consideration is given to undertake a management programme.

However, management of spasticity does not necessarily



restore lost abilities entirely and is, therefore, a combination of a compensatory and restorative approach. Spasticity cannot be an isolated dysfunction.

It has direct and indirect effects that need to be recorded over time in a functional-based assessment to fully appreciate its impact on overall functional abilities of the patient. The core of therapy intervention is the training in functional tasks that are meaningful to the individual

enabling maximal independence. There are various techniques or interventions widely used in rehabilitation applied in combination with other therapies for maximum therapeutic benefit. Therapies based on manual therapy are generally beneficial and widely practised.

Spasticity is best managed by maintaining the length of vulnerable tissues. Therefore, appropriate seating, positioning and splinting are paramount to maintain joint integrity, appropriate soft tissue length, prevent further contractures and enhance an individual's engagement in day-to-day function.

Activity-based training is evidenced to restore function using standardised therapeutic activities. Besides physical and functional training other tools like hydrotherapy, functional Electrical Stimulation (FES), robotics and virtual reality based technologies are also very useful in the management of spasticity.

**These techniques will be discussed at the forthcoming workshop on spasticity for health professionals on 14th and 15th July 2019 at Victoria Hospital.**

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