Team Rehab
July 1996
MEMPHIS — Corrinne Carriere, left, of Ontario-based Special Health Systems and Jessica Presperin, O.T.R., Chicago, take a break at the International Seating Symposium in February. For more on the conference, turn to page 33.
NRRTS Opens Doors To Members

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Membership applications are now being accepted by the National Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers (NRRTS), a nonprofit organization designed to help clinicians, consumers and third party payers identify qualified suppliers, as well as ensure the provision of quality services.

"We want to try and locate as many suppliers as possible across the country who are doing this type of work and bring them together, so they have a common voice," NRRTS chair Adrienne Falk Bergen, P.T., Dynamic Medical, Westbury, N.Y., said TeamRehab Report.

"Then, once we’ve done that and know their concerns, we will move toward the certification process. Those people who are members will be privy to the process as we proceed," she said.

The NRRTS defines a rehab technology supplier (RTS) as a specialist who provides enabling technology in the areas of wheeled mobility, seated and alternative positioning, ambulation assistance, environmental control and activities of daily living. To qualify for membership, applicants must:

• be employed, for at least one year, by a medical equipment company, orthotic company, or other specialized facility that supplies rehabilitation equipment, offers consumer product choices and employs trained support staff;
• participate directly in the assessment process;
• work with manufacturers and/or custom fabricators to combine equipment features to meet specific client needs;
• provide fittings and deliveries as directed by the referring professional;
• instruct the client on how to safely use equipment; offer information on maintenance and care; pass along available manufacturers’ warranty information; and provide high quality service.

In addition, applicants must agree, in writing, to comply with the NRRTS Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

According to Bergen, the NRRTS hopes to receive several hundred applications. One of the problems, she noted, is that there are currently no statistics available on the number of RTSs nationwide.

NHHCE CHANGES NAME TO MEDTRADE

ATLANTA — Reflecting the increasingly diversified, international scope of the U.S. medical products industry, The National Home Health Care Exposition (NHHCE) has undergone a name change. The 14-year-old trade show will now be called MEDTRADE, Medical Products for the Global Market Place, according to Ted Conrad, president of SEMCO Medical Expositions, show organizers.

While the $6 billion home health care industry still comprises the majority of the show, Conrad said that three additional markets — international trade, rehab and sports medicine, and long term care — have grown in prominence.

On the global front, Conrad pointed to a “dramatic surge of international interest” in U.S. medical products, citing a 11.5 percent increase in the number of international buyers at last fall’s show. (equipment and service, the NRRTS will develop requirements for continuing education courses needed for membership renewal.)

The NRRTS will also publish a Membership Directory for consumers, allied health professionals and third party payers. The first directory will probably be out in the fall, Bergen said, and then updated once a year. In addition, a responsive complaint procedure will be initiated to address concerns from consumers, referral sources, manufacturers and other RTSs concerning NRRTS members.


Members of the advisory council, which will act as a liaison between the NRRTS and the rehab industry, are: Peter
2. Who participates in the evaluation?
3. Who assists with funding procurement?
4. Who provides warranty information, maintenance and repair, and follow-up services?

C. Gerald Warren, M.P.A., C. Gerald Warren & Associates, Seattle, Wash., discussed the need for a QA program. "In the past, the model was vendor-driven," he noted. "Now we're trying to make it consumer-driven. We want to involve the ATP (assistive technology provider) and the RTS.

"Only by developing a QA program with criteria for AT interventions and outcome measures can we expect to increase the effectiveness of and the satisfaction with the interventions," he added.

The next meeting of the International Seating Symposium will take place February 17-18, 1994, in Vancouver, B.C.

A seating and mobility design contest is being held in conjunction with the symposium. The winner will receive free conference registration and accommodations. Entry deadline is November 30, 1993.

Contact: David Cooper, Sunny Hill Hospital For Children, Vancouver, B.C., V5M 1E8, 604/438-6067.
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Freedom Designs
NIDRR’s New

Director Katherine Seelman plans to address the information highway, health care reform and consumer involvement.

By Peter Truesel, TeamRehab Report

Under the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research’s purpose is to improve the quality of life of the 49 million Americans with disabilities.

Six months into her new job as director of NIDRR, Katherine Seelman, Ph.D., has a vision of expanding the scope of the agency that itself administers $1.4 billion in research, demonstration projects, training and related activities.

“NIDRR will strive to be proactive in responding to consumers.”

—Katherine Seelman

NIDRR’s mission is to maximize the full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, family support and economic and social self-sufficiency of the disabled population.

Seelman, who is hearing impaired, aims to accomplish this by expanding the agency’s current focus. To help people with disabilities gain access to housing, employment and health care, for example, NIDRR will gather information on economic trends of the global and U.S. economic population trends, especially those related to aging, cultural norms and socioeconomic status; technological trends and strategies on the information highway; trends in public policy; and practices that focus on consumers, researchers and service providers together.

To achieve these goals, NIDRR will develop outcome measures and evaluation tools to assess the effectiveness of demonstrations, models and training efforts.
Minkel's Mission

For more than a decade, Jean Minkel has been more than a physical therapist. Her personal interest and professional involvement have helped lead the growth of assistive technology and service delivery.

Jean Minkel's work day never really ends. A physical therapist and outspoken advocate for rehabilitation technology, she has successfully intertwined a commitment to the field and assistive technology with a love of helping others. In the process, she has contributed wealth of knowledge back to the field.

Through numerous volunteer, behind-the-scenes efforts, Minkel has had a national impact in the development of wheelchair standards, quality assurance, continuing education and informing payers of the value of assistive technology. Her motivation, she says, is simple: "I want the field to succeed as much as I want the client to succeed."

But for all her accomplishments, Minkel seems just as proud of the relationships she's established in 11 years as a physical therapist—relationships with consumers, colleagues, students and even, often, crossing over the line into product endorsement with manufacturers.

"I don't know of too many other professional fields where people who could be in competition with each other are exactly the opposite—they're collaborative and sharing and open," she says. "It's all of what attracted me to the field."

After receiving her M.A. in physical therapy from Stanford University, she worked at Massachusetts Hospital School in Canton, Mass., a nationally based pediatric facility where the staff had many equipment needs. "There was a need for me to be involved with chairs intimately," she recals. "It gave me an appreciation for the need or function."

She then spent two years at Rensselaer Children's Hospital in Albany, N.Y., which employs a more developmental treatment approach. "What I learned for myself professionally was that I was not trained at hands-on treatment as I was in setting a child up in the right chair," she says.

She decided to look for a position that would guide her to work with equipment full time. It was then that the offer came along to help start up the Center for Rehabilitation Technology (CRT) at St. Mary's Hospital, West Haven, N.Y. "It seemed a natural. I had just landed in a niche," she says of the opportunity.

Minkel has been a testing and mobility specialist at the CRT for the past seven years. The CRT
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   - Speaker: Adrienne Berger, P.T., Dynamic Medical Equipment, Westbury, N.Y.

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   - Speaker: Joan Biree, R.N., P.T., Staten Island Hospital, West New York, N.J.

3. Topic: The Impact of Wheelchair Standards
   - Imagine being able to compare wheelchair performance durability prior to purchasing. The ANSI wheelchair standards provide uniform test methods that allow comparison of test results. Learn how to interpret these standards and the terminology to help you sell with confidence.
   - Speaker: Joan Biree, R.N., P.T., Staten Island Hospital, West New York, N.J.

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5. Topic: Break Down The Supplier/Therapist Barrier
   - Understand the expectations of each member of the rehab team and learn how to work together. Understanding each other’s skills can only help to communicate what’s best for the client’s seating and mobility needs.
   - Speaker: Susan Johnson Snyder, O.T.R., and David Knecht, P.T., Shepherd Spinal Center, Atlanta

6. Topic: Successful Power Wheelchair Users
   - Learn what factors to consider when designing power wheelchair interfaces for people with moderate to severe disabilities. Consideration of the developmental level, physical and cognitive, behavior, and psychomotor control and function are discussed as they relate to choosing an appropriate control interface and its placement.

7. Topic: How To Work With The Tech Act States
   - There are 42 states funded under the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988. Their mission is to develop programs to expand the availability of assistive technology through a comprehensive consumer-responsive statewide program of technology-related services. Learn how you can work with these states in expanding delivery of products and services to consumers.
   - Speaker: Neil Belknap, Manager, NSRAS Tech Act Project, Washington, D.C.

Seminars sponsored by TeamRehab Reports and John Edward Foundation.

For more information contact TeamRehab Reports, 3951 Kleinstone, 200/843-4116, ext. 299, or fax: 310/327-1081.
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MK Battery
Bob Williams learned early on that he could effect change by taking action.

By Kimberly Pfahl, TeamRehab Report

Bob Williams began his fight for equality early in life; he credits much of his success to growing up during the civil rights era, and to the support and encouragement of his family. “Growing up in the 1960s and 70s, two things were perfectly clear to me,” he says. “The first was that my opportunities as an American with significant disabilities were very limited—not because of my lack of abilities but because of others’ perceptions and lower expectations.

“The second thing... was that we had a great deal in common with those in the civil rights movement of that era. This is where most of my activism first flowed from.”

“My anger at the injustice of... prejudice soon followed and it has never completely left me.”

Williams has cerebral palsy and speaks with a Liberato communication device. He was about 13 years old when he led a sit-down strike of students in his special ed class, which eventually led to his and others’ inclusion in regular education. As a teenager in the 1970s, he testified before legislation in town council meetings.

Still, Williams says, his family’s absolute belief in his abilities could not shield him from the indifference of others. “I still remember moving to a new town and how the neighborhood kids taunted me. My anger at the injustice of their prejudice soon followed and it has never completely left me.”

Speaking of what he terms a “disability pecking order,” Williams remarks...
NRRTS OKs University Program for RTSs

Enrollment in the first university-based continuing education program for rehabilitation technology suppliers (RTSs) is expected in early 1996 at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Health and Rehabilitation Science’s Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology.

In addition, the University is expected to develop an RTS certification review course to help RTSs prepare for the RTS certification exam.

The exam, expected to be ready in early 1996, is being developed through a joint agreement between the National Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers (NRRTS) and the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA).

NRRTS and the University agreed on the following for the continuing education program:

• It would be available to all RTSs, but would not be mandatory for certification or continuing NRRTS membership.
• The curriculum would be developed in modules. An advisory board of NRRTS members, University faculty and other experts will identify the curriculum content and suggest module authors.
• The goal of the modules would be to develop an education program that combines University-based and home-based learning. Eventually, the program would be presented through interactive satellite networks possibly based at local community colleges.

For more information, contact: NRRTS, 3223 S. Loop 289, Suite 600, Lubbock, Texas 79423; 806/797-7299, fax: 806/797-8420.

Newly elected NRRTS board members are, from left: directors-at-large Jan Funamasu, P.T., Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center, Downey, Calif., and Cyndi Jones, publisher, Mainstream magazine, San Diego; president Simon Margolis, C.O., Otto Bock, Minneapolis; secretary Denise Swango, Metro Rehab Services, Evergreen Park, Ill.; and vice president Dan Lipka, O.T.R./L., Miller’s, Akron, Ohio.
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