

# The Silent Struggle: A Story of Seating Clinics

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In a quiet corner of the city hospital, tucked between orthopedic wards and outpatient therapy rooms, sits the Seating Clinic, a place few know exists, yet for many, it's the last hope for mobility, dignity, and independence.

For decades, Seating Clinics have served as lifelines for individuals with complex rehabilitation needs. These are not your average wheelchair fittings. They are centers of expertise where clinicians, therapists, and technicians work tirelessly to match people with the highly specialized equipment they need to live full lives - custom wheelchairs, pressure-relieving cushions, tilt-in-space systems, and adaptive controls. Each device is tailored to the person's body, condition, lifestyle, and therapeutic need. It's not just about sitting; it's about surviving.

Take Make-believe Marcus, for example - a 17-year-old with cerebral palsy. His spine curves sharply, his muscles spasm unpredictably, and his skin is prone to breakdown. A standard wheelchair would leave him in pain, unable to

attend school or socialize. At the Seating Clinic, a team assessed his posture, measured his body, and trialed equipment. They designed a chair that supports his spine, cushions his pressure points, and allows him to control movement with a single switch. For Make-believe Marcus, that chair is freedom. And although Marcus is a fictitious person, he is an example of all-too-real individuals that need the clinic approach every day!

But the clinics are under siege.

Funding cuts have slashed budgets. Insurance companies balk at the cost of custom equipment, often denying claims or forcing families through months of appeals. Clinics are short-staffed, overwhelmed, and under-recognized. The work is complex, requiring deep clinical knowledge and technical skill, yet reimbursement rates barely cover the time it takes to do a proper evaluation. Many seating specialists burn out or leave the field entirely.

Patients suffer the consequences. Waitlists stretch for months. Children

outgrow their chairs before they're even delivered. Adults with progressive conditions like ALS or MS are left in outdated equipment that no longer meets their needs. The result? Increased hospitalizations, preventable injuries, and a devastating loss of independence.

Despite these challenges, the people behind Seating Clinics persist. They are driven by compassion and a fierce belief in human potential. They celebrate small victories - a child who can finally sit upright, a veteran who regains control of his power chair, a grandmother who can now join her family at the dinner table.

Advocates are fighting back. Some clinics partner with nonprofits to fund equipment. Others lobby for policy changes to streamline approvals and increase reimbursement. There's a growing movement to recognize seating and mobility as essential healthcare - not a luxury, but a right.

The Seating Clinic may be hidden from view, but its impact is profound. It's where science meets empathy, where technology becomes

transformation. And though the road is steep, the mission is clear: to ensure that every person, regardless of ability, has the chance to sit, move, and live with dignity. After all, movement is a human right.

## A New Chapter: The Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation

Amid the challenges facing Seating Clinics nationwide, a beacon of hope has emerged. The Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation (MCAR), a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to complex rehabilitation technology, opened its doors with a bold vision: to redefine access, innovation, and excellence in care. At the heart of MCAR is the James M. Cox Innovation Institute, a multidisciplinary hub where seating and mobility experts, driving rehabilitation specialists, and technology access professionals collaborate to empower lives. This case study explores how MCAR is transforming the landscape, one patient, one device, one breakthrough at a time.

## CLINICAL EDITORIAL

## Let Us Hear from You

As we consider the difficulties facing patients and seating and mobility professionals, and the MCAR's shining model of what a seating clinic can be, Weesie Walker's article and pictorial (next article in this issue) offer a great reminder of the people and purpose behind the human right of movement. If your clinic has developed unique

approaches, faced challenges, or uncovered insights, we encourage you to share with us your experience. Your stories, strategies, and lessons learned can help strengthen the collective knowledge across seating clinics nationwide and ensure that they continue to serve as effective tools for dignity, innovation, and better outcomes.



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