

CLINICAL EDITORIAL

Center for Assistive Technologies Taking Seating Clinic to a New “Height”

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Seating clinics were created to provide clinicians and suppliers with a setting to assess a person's individual needs for positioning and mobility using mat evaluation and trial products. This valuable service has become harder to sustain due to lack of realistic funding for clinicians. Most clinics open today have support from a foundation or a grant to cover the staffing and operations. Without external funding, some clinics have closed.

Seating professionals know that the best outcomes are achieved when the team works together to identify the individual needs of the client.

Currently, access and long waiting times for appointments have become an issue. The options for the end user include:

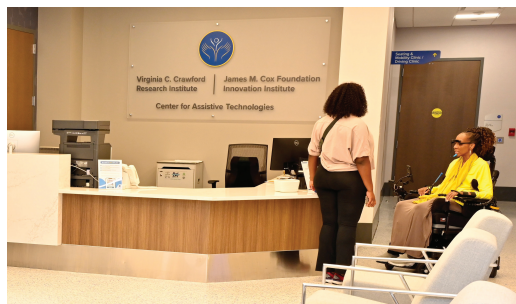
Option 1 - Wait for an appointment (can be up to five months)

Option 2 - Work with a home health therapist

Option 3 - Telehealth evaluation

Each option has drawbacks.

Option one is obvious. More time added to an already lengthy process.



The check-in lobby for Assistive Technologies at the Shepherd Center is spacious and inviting. Located on the 11th floor of the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation, the technology clinics have truly reached new heights, both literally and figuratively.



The Driving Evaluation and Rehabilitation Program provides clinical evaluation and driving assessments.



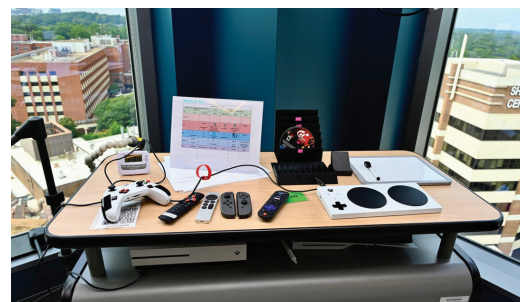
Technology, technology, technology.



Trial setups.



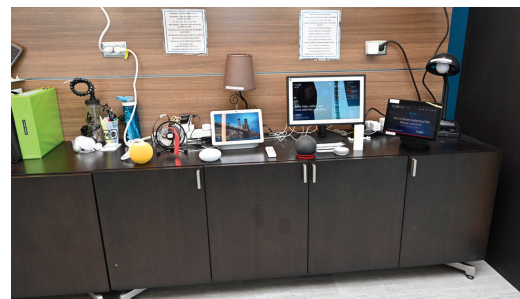
Chris Maurer, PT, ATP, Center for Assistive Technologies Program Manager, in the smart kitchen lab. Patients can try out the technology and learn what options are available to provide more independence.



The Travis Roy Ability Bar offers adaptive gaming options. Patients can try out different components to determine what works best for their individual needs. In 1995, Travis Roy suffered a C3-C4 spinal cord injury in his first hockey game at Boston University. He created a foundation that provides grants to people with spinal cord injury to enhance their lives. Roy passed away in 2020. This Ability Bar was created in his memory by his foundation.

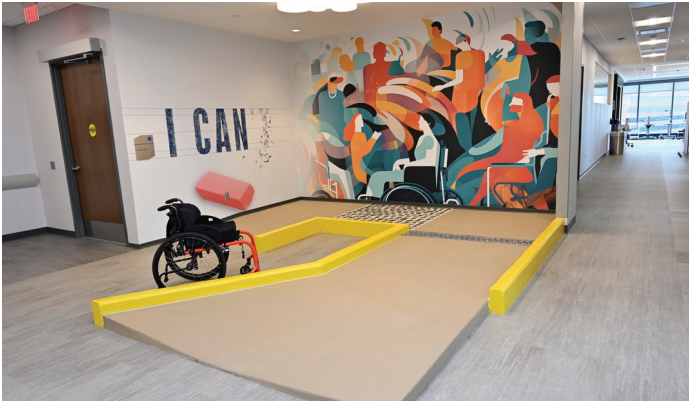


In the Smart Tech Hub, the in-service area offers a corner view. Staying up to date on the latest technology is important.



Vast array of devices.

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The Seating and Mobility Clinic has a built-in obstacle course with ramps, curbs and cobblestones.



Tile patterns on the floor are used for patients to visualize how different power chairs perform when turning and maneuvering in tight spaces.



Space-saving wheelchair storage for demo chairs. More chairs equal more choice for the patient.



Manual wheelchair shelf lowers for easy access.



Wheelchair components and wheel options on display.



All exam rooms offer a stunning view.



Robin Skolsky, PT, ATP/SMS, evaluates Gerald's seating with Alex Biello, ATP, CRTS®. The Seating Clinic treats patients over 12 years of age with any diagnosis.



Shop area, equipped with tools and wheelchair lift, is available for suppliers to make on-site adjustments and modifications.



Suppliers have a designated office space. Guess who they work for? Milton Robinson and Derek Register, ATP, CRTS®.



Chris Maurer, PT, ATP, Center for Assistive Technologies Program Manager.

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Option two results will vary depending on clinician and supplier skills and how they work together. Trial and choice of equipment is typically limited.

Option three limits the effectiveness of teamwork with either the supplier or the clinician working remotely.

There is good news. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Shepherd Center, opened in 1975 as a six-bed unit of an Atlanta hospital. Today, Shepherd is a 152-bed hospital providing treatment for diagnoses such as spinal cord injury, brain injury, multiple sclerosis and other complex conditions.

Shepherd recently opened the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation (MCAR Building), which houses the James M. Cox Innovation Institute that includes seating and mobility, driving and access technology specialists.

The MCAR Building, supported by an \$80 million grant from the Marcus Foundation and other generous donors, opened in April 2025 and is located adjacent to the main Shepherd Center campus.

The Access Technology Lab offers solutions for living, working and playing. After clinical evaluation by technology experts, patients can trial different devices to determine which works best. Offering independence ranging

from turning on a light switch to accessing a computer or mobile device, this lab benefits people with mobility barriers, vision barriers, hearing loss and neurological conditions.

The Wheelchair Seating and Mobility Clinic provides in-depth evaluations and custom fittings. From the obstacle course to the storage of wheelchairs, this clinic offers a better experience for all: patient, clinician and supplier.

The seating team effort is focused on greatest independence, comfort and safety for the patient. With a clinical assessment and trial equipment, patients can see the options and make choices.

In today's Complex Rehab Technology world, where we are witnessing the closure of seating clinics, it is refreshing to see this example of a clinic that offers so much in one space. Everyone who relies on CRT should have access to services provided by experts focused on individual need and function.

For more information about Shepherd Center and its 50th anniversary, visit www.shepherd.org/mission-moments/



Jenny Cowhig, PT, DPT, ATP, a research therapist, and Lakisha Gray, MSOT, OTR/L, CDRS, a driving therapist, show off their office.



Center for Assistive Technologies.



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Weesie Walker, ATP/SMS, is the certificate program curator. She has more than 25 years of experience as a Complex Rehab Technology Supplier. She has

served on the iNRRTS Board of Directors, the GAMES Board of Directors and the Professional Standards Board of RESNA. Throughout her career, she has worked to advocate for professional suppliers and the customers they serve. She has presented at the Canadian Seating Symposium, RESNA Conference, AOTA Conference, Medtrade, International Seating Symposium and the National Seating & Mobility Symposium. Walker is an iNRRTS Fellow.