CLINICAL EDITORIAL

# Looking Beyond the Prescription:
## Life Experiences At Its Best

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Throughout my years as a clinician prescribing complex rehabilitation equipment, it has been the people and their experiences that have kept me focused, motivated and passionate about being the best advocate possible, not simply the job itself.

As budgets shrink, timelines become shorter and policy changes affect access, it becomes even more important to remember why we do this work. It is not just about completing a prescription or delivering equipment. It is about understanding and listening to what a client needs to truly live.

More importantly, it is about helping people live better and experiencing opportunities they may never have had before or thought they had lost forever. We must also remember that every dead battery or broken part can take away hours, days or even weeks of participation in daily life. In some cases, equipment failure can even prevent someone from getting out of bed.

We must listen, respond and understand the lives we affect through the decisions we make. What may seem like a small detail to us can make a world of difference to a client.

It is the device that gives a parent or caregiver valuable hands-free time while their child stands independently in a standing frame, allowing both the child and caregiver to engage in daily life.

It is the standing wheelchair that brought tears to the eyes of an 18 -year-old with a spinal cord injury when he placed his hands in his pockets for the first time since his accident. He could not do that from a seated position, and the moment had tremendous meaning for his self-image and confidence.

It is the father who "walked" his daughter down the aisle in his standing wheelchair on her wedding day.

It is the pet owner who could place food and water bowls on the floor using power seat elevation set at its lowest position and then raise the seat to walk a beloved dog through a favorite park without asking for assistance.

It is the young accountant who started his first office job without requiring special accommodations because his power standing wheelchair allowed him to access desks, supply cabinets and workplace interactions independently.

It also enabled him to join co-workers for after-work social gatherings.

It is the parent of newborn twins who, with a custom tray and changing-table system mounted on the front of her wheelchair, was able to interact with her babies in ways she never thought possible.

It is the father who could take his children to the park and travel alongside them on their bicycles because a power-assist device allowed him to navigate grass and uneven terrain.

It is the Paralympic gold medal curler who never imagined winning an Olympic medal, much less carrying his nation's flag while using a manual wheelchair equipped with power assist to access not only the stage, but the world beyond it.

It is the child in Haiti with hydrocephalus who had always been carried by her father and finally experienced the freedom of sitting upright in a supportive seating system. For the first time, she could observe her hands, bring them to midline and engage in play.

It is the brother of a man in Uganda who rode miles on a bicycle, chickens balanced on the handlebars to barter for a wheelchair for his brother, who had never before been able to travel independently beyond his home.

It is the husband and wife who shared a dance while he stood in his wheelchair after believing he would never again stand and hold her in his arms. After sustaining a traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury, he entered long-term care at age 45 and spent his days in a manual tilt wheelchair. With a comprehensive assessment, appropriate equipment, training and support, he now independently drives a power wheelchair with standing and dynamic seating |functions. Recently, he and his wife celebrated by taking a 10-day anniversary cruise together, something they never thought possible.

It is about transferring in and out of a bed in an "accessible" hotel room that was not truly accessible until power seat elevation made the transfer possible.

It is the young man who discovered wheelchair basketball and found something he had been missing. He felt the excitement

of hearing the ball swish through the net and the joy of being part of a team again. As he told me, "I would never have found this joy if I hadn't been put in a specialty wheelchair that enabled me to play basketball."

These are the real moments in my career that should inspire us all. They remind us why we do what we do and why we should be proud of our profession.

We must continue striving for optimal functional posture, adhering to best-practice guidelines, conducting thorough physical and functional assessments, and practicing effective teamwork. Each individual deserves a personalized approach.

Our responsibility is not to provide identical equipment to two people simply because they share the same diagnosis. Instead, we must listen carefully, observe closely and understand the differences that make each person unique. We must develop equipment recommendations that reflect an individual's body, environment, goals and life story.

In the end, it is the stories that matter.

They are our clients' stories, but they become part of our stories as well. We share in the pride, the tears and the smiles when equipment opens doors to possibilities once thought lost.

We help make dreams possible.

And when that happens, it is one of the best feelings in the world for everyone involved.



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Buck has presented on seating and mobility concepts across the lifespan throughout Ireland, Norway, Oceania and North America. Her audiences have included physical therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, physicians, case managers, durable medical equipment providers and manufacturers of seating and mobility products. Her expertise in assistive technology and mobility is reflected in her book, “More Than 4 Wheels: Applying Clinical Practice to Seating, Mobility and Assistive Technology, Third Edition.” The book is used as a clinical resource worldwide and has sold more than 1,500 copies. Buck is also a contributing author to “Seating and Wheeled Mobility: A Clinical Resource Guide.” She is widely recognized for her commitment to client advocacy and for advancing education and best practices throughout the seating and mobility industry.