



Title	Mid-wheel Drive Powered Wheelchairs
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Aim

To advise the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ) on whether to add mid-wheel drive powered wheelchairs (MWDs) to its list of insured devices, and if so, to recommend eligibility requirements for potential users.

databases (eg, MEDLINE) yielded sparse results, while a web search found 2 well-designed studies. These studies led to the recommendations above.

Conclusions and results

Limited evidence shows that MWDs perform as well as conventionally-powered wheelchairs. In general, MWDs have characteristics as good as, or superior to, those of rear-wheel drives (RWDs) and front-wheel drives (FWDs), especially their better maneuverability in tight spaces. However, questions can be raised about the quality of mobility products in general. In one U.S. study, 9 out of 15 wheel chairs (including MWDs) failed at least 1 of 11 standards tests. MWDs appear reasonably priced. No studies detailed specific eligibility requirements for MWD users.

Recommendations

AÉTMIS recommends that RAMQ add MWDs to the list of insured mobility products, provided they comply with the standards set for powered wheelchairs. Given the poor performance of more than half the wheelchairs tested (on at least one criteria), RAMQ should perform compliance tests on more than one of the same brand of chair that it considers purchasing.

Based on the lack of information regarding eligibility requirements, the current practice of relying on the judgement healthcare practitioners within the multidisciplinary team should remain the method for determining eligibility.

Methods

AÉTMIS reviewed the laws, regulations, and standards governing the manufacturing, distribution, and sale of powered wheelchairs. AÉTMIS looked for comparative controlled studies on the effectiveness, safety, and cost of different models of powered wheelchairs. Conventional