



Title	Postural Support Devices
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Reference	AÉTMIS 03-07. Internet access to full text. ISBN 2-550-42137-X (French edition ISBN 2-550-41953-7) x-47 p

Aim

To investigate available postural support devices (PSDs) – including their components and methods of construction – and to establish the efficacy, safety, and cost of each product.

Conclusions and results

Québec wheelchair users are prescribed a wide range of PSDs that are covered by Québec health insurance (Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec, or RAMQ). In 2002, prescriptions for seat and back cushions, and leg, foot, arm, head, or neck rests cost RAMQ nearly \$10 million, with the unit cost ranging from \$80 to over \$800. RAMQ asked AÉTMIS to investigate postural support devices.

RAMQ became aware that the price it paid for PSD products varied by as much as a factor of two, depending on the supplier. Some institutions consistently offered their patients the 'upmarket' product, even though evidence on the efficacy, safety, and comparative cost of PSDs is practically nonexistent.

Few studies have been conducted on PSDs, and no system exists to objectively compare wheelchair cushions across manufacturers. Much of the knowledge required for RAMQ decision-making is still being generated. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has recently mandated a working group to set standards.

This report includes an updateable selection grid that cross-references nearly 500 PSD products with major evaluation criteria. It also includes some preliminary selection criteria.

Recommendations

AÉTMIS recommends that RAMQ:

- Adopt the minimal selection grid created for this report
- Use this information immediately to implement billing procedures with institutions and suppliers

- Form a consensus group (including prescribers, users, suppliers, and experts) to design a more complete selection grid
- Consider implementing relational databases that cross-tabulate information relevant to administering the program and, in particular, to current and emerging equipment standards.

Methods

AÉTMIS identified all PSD comparative studies through a search of bibliographic databases. This led to the sponsorship of a report (by Rachid Aissaoui, the former principal investigator of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Industrial Research Chair on Wheelchair Seating Aids) to document all PSD products.

The information in the selection grid created by Rachid Aissaoui was drawn from manufacturers' websites. The report's authors did not have access to the products, nor did they perform standardized tests on them. Existing studies were used to identify the product evaluation criteria and some preliminary product selections.