

BULLETIN

Helping therapists choose the right equipment

June 1, 2000

The Report: June / July 2000 vol.21 num.3

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While on a three-month fact-finding mission several years ago, GF Strong Physiotherapist Ian Denison realized that it is difficult for most therapists to keep up to date on various equipment options for their patients. "It was very evident that clinicians working in the community, and even in the smaller facilities, weren't able to keep up to speed on what equipment was available," Denison said.

He found out that as a result, many patients were not receiving the optimal equipment for their needs. So he decided to do something about it.

Seven years ago, he started an annual exhibition of rehabilitation equipment to help occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and other clinicians make decisions on purchasing medical equipment. The first show, held at George Pearson Centre seven years ago, had 20 booths. The show has proven extremely popular, and has been growing yearly. "It's now the largest show of its kind in western Canada," Denison notes. "This year we've got 96 booths. And we expect to see around 400 to 500 people."

Denison says the majority of visitors to the show are occupational therapists, and he is happy that the exhibition gives them a chance to familiarize themselves with recent innovations in rehab equipment.

His research found that because of work pressures, most occupational therapists don't have the time to attend an array of inservices by equipment manufacturers during the normal course of their jobs. "This was identified by most of the OTs and PTs I interviewed; they'd like to see all the stuff in one go. And when I spoke to the manufacturers and dealers, they wanted to be able to get as many clinicians together in one go."

Denison adds that the exhibition also includes an educational component. "We provide an education session that complements the trade show. We're also offering four expert booths throughout the show, where there's an expert on hand at the booth who will answer any question you have in their particular area of specialty. And those booths are staffed throughout the entire day by different experts for half an hour each," he says. "That proved to be really popular last year. People could get the information they wanted in a very cost-effective and time-effective way, and be able to see the exhibits as well."

The exhibition features a wide variety of equipment, from beds and wheelchairs to therapeutic putty. "It's really a win-win situation, because the clinicians get what they want - they are able to see everything under one large roof. And the retailers get what they need; they are able to get as many clinicians in and talk to clinicians who wouldn't normally have time to see them."

Rehab Equipment Expo 2000 takes place September 19, 8am to 4pm, at Seaforth Armouries (1650 Burrard Street) in Vancouver. Admission is \$2.

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