



College of Nursing and Health Professions  
In the tradition of Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania and Hahnemann Medical College

Programs in Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Sciences

March 4, 2009

Anuja Mehra, M.S., M.B.A.  
Program Manager  
Office of International Programs

**Narrative Report International Travel Award**  
Third International Cerebral Palsy Conference  
Sydney, Australia  
February 18-21, 2009

**Background:**

The International Travel Award helped support my participation in the Third International Cerebral Palsy Conference in Sydney, Australia, February 18-21, 2009. I was invited as a keynote speaker, gave three oral research platform presentations, and served on the Scientific Committee for the conference. This entailed appraisal of abstracts for oral and poster presentations submitted in July 2008 and moderating sessions at the conference.

The meeting was attended by almost 1,400 health care professionals (physicians, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, psychologists), researchers, educators, policy makers, and parents of children with cerebral palsy. Over 60 countries were represented.

The conference was coordinated activities of the Cerebral Palsy Foundation of Australia. Keynote speakers were invited to a dinner the first evening attended by donors to the Foundation and members of the New South Wales government. The World Cerebral Palsy Register and Surveillance Congress met during the meeting. The United States was represented by the Center for Disease Control.

Abstracts of presentations are published in *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, volume 51, supplement 2, 2009.

**Research Platform Presentations:**

*Probability of Walking and Wheeled Mobility for Children and Youth with Cerebral Palsy  
Based on Age and Environmental Setting*

The findings provide evidence for decisions regarding mobility of children and youth with cerebral palsy including anticipation of age related changes and the effect of environmental setting. Individual preference and the specific environmental features of home, school, and

outdoors are also important to consider when making decisions regarding goals and interventions for mobility.

#### *Social Engagement and Community Participation Among Children and Youth with Cerebral Palsy*

Children and youth with cerebral palsy were more socially-engaged and community-orientated when performing formal, physical, and skill-based activities. When serving children and youth who are interested in participating with others in community activities, physical therapists have a role in assisting families to locate community programs and consulting with instructors/coaches to enable active participation.

#### *Mobility Experiences of Youth with Cerebral Palsy*

Youth viewed mobility as important for self-sufficiency. Youth spoke of constantly adapting to situations that often reflected a lack of control over the environment. Youth indicated the need for constantly planning ahead to go places and do things. Most youth were dependent on others for transportation and expressed dissatisfaction with public transportation. Safe and efficient mobility to enable participation in daily activities is a primary concern of youth with cerebral palsy.

#### **Keynote Presentation:**

##### *Gross Motor Function Through the Lifespan of Individuals with Cerebral Palsy*

The presentation synthesized research that I have participated in the past 15 years and my perspectives on implications for knowledge translation and decision making. A theme was the distinction between what children and youth "can do" in an optimal situation, what they typically "do" in daily life, and the lived experiences perspectives of youth. The importance of involving children and youth in making choices for mobility, consideration of the method that optimizes participation, and the perspective that wheeled mobility does not preclude walking, and the were shared.



Robert Palisano, PT, ScD

Professor

Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Sciences