



Te Kaporeihana Āwhina Hunga Whara

Considered Judgement Form

This form is a checklist of issues that may be considered by the Purchasing Guidance Advisory Group when making purchasing recommendations.

Meeting date: 24 March 2005

Topic: Project Walk™

Background and Purpose:

Project Walk™ is an intensive exercise and physical rehabilitation programme designed for people with spinal cord injury. It uses an approach known as the Dardzinski Method™ and was established by Ted and Tammy Dardzinski in Carlsbad, California in March 1999. It has around 20 staff and has treated over 60 clients. According to the Project Walk™ website¹, its first international centre, Project Walk™ New Zealand², was set up at an established fitness centre in Te Awamutu in 2003.

However, further communication with the managers of the fitness centre³ revealed that the programme currently on offer there is very similar to, but independent from, Project Walk™. The Te Awamutu programme is provided by Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Services NZ Ltd⁴. It lasts for a minimum of 12 weeks and currently has four clients. Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Services NZ Ltd has been operating on a small scale for 15 years, but enlarged its facilities after staff attended the US Project Walk™ programme in May 2004. It is planning to launch a new 4 week intensive programme, with follow-up, for clients leaving Burwood and Otara spinal units.

Mary Leighton (Programme Manager, Specialised Services, Healthwise) has asked the Evidence Based Healthcare Advisory Group to identify what, if any, evidence is available on the effectiveness of the approaches used by Project Walk™ and Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Services NZ Ltd as a treatment programme for people with spinal cord injury. The accompanying Brief Report was completed in September 2004. The information on Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Services NZ Ltd contained in this Considered Judgement Form was obtained in March 2005.

¹ See <http://www.projectwalk.org>

² See <http://www.projectwalk.co.nz/>

³ See <http://www.brucesfitness.co.nz/index.html>

⁴ See <http://www.brucesfitness.co.nz/sci/index.html>

<p>1. Effectiveness, Volume of Evidence, Applicability /Generalisability and Consistency</p> <p>No systematic, independent evaluations of the Dardzinski method™ or the services offered by Project Walk™ or Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Services NZ Ltd were found.</p> <p>Brief outcome data on nine Project Walk™ clients is available from the website⁵. However, there are inconsistencies in the information provided and, despite the stated aim of updating outcome data every six months, the information has not been updated since March 2003.</p> <p>Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Services NZ Ltd report that they have systems in place to monitor clients' progress, but no information on formal outcomes has been made available to date.</p>
<p>2. Cost</p> <p>According to the main Project Walk™ website the initial five-hour consultation and evaluation week (three hour sessions daily for five days) costs US\$1,650 (NZ\$2,270). The first week in the programme costs US\$1,650 and clients are charged US\$100 (NZ\$137) per hour thereafter. The prescribed programme and therefore ongoing costs to the client are worked out individually and depend on their spinal injury location and other factors. The average monthly fee is stated as being under US\$3,000 (approx. NZ\$4,130 at current exchange rates⁶).</p> <p>Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Services NZ Ltd charge NZ\$95 per hour for the first 20 hours of their programme and NZ\$90 per hour thereafter.</p>
<p>3. Clinical impact</p> <p>No information was found on the risks associated with these programmes.</p> <p>Project Walk™ trainers are required to have a degree in an exercise-related field as well as certification in first aid and personal training.</p> <p>Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Services NZ Ltd personnel have qualifications and experience in various aspects of exercise and fitness training.</p>
<p>4. Equity, Maori/Pacific Health, Acceptability</p> <p>Despite references on the website to Project Walk™ New Zealand, the Project Walk™ programme appears to be only available at the Carlsbad centre in California.</p> <p>Clients wishing to use Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Services NZ Ltd have to travel to Te Awamutu.</p>
<p>5. Possible Purchasing Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't purchase • Don't purchase at this stage, but review the decision when new evidence becomes available • Purchase subject to special controls: case-based approval • Purchase
<p>6. Evidence Statement</p> <p><u>Evidence Statement</u></p> <p>It is currently not possible to determine the effectiveness of Project Walk™ or Spinal Cord Injury</p>

⁵ See <http://www.projectwalk.org/research/functRsrch033103.htm>

⁶ **One** US dollar = 1.37 NZ dollar at time of writing

Rehabilitation Services NZ Ltd due to lack of evidence.

7. Purchasing Recommendations

Purchasing recommendation:

Do not purchase at this stage, but review the decision when new evidence becomes available.

PGAG Discussion:

ACC has received very few requests for this treatment.

Glossary

1. Effectiveness, Volume of Evidence, Applicability /Generalisability and Consistency

Comment here on:

- the extent to which the service/product/ procedure achieves the desired outcomes. Specific reference needs to be made to safety. Report number needed to treat and harm where possible,
- any issues concerning the quantity of evidence and its methodological quality and the extent to which the evidence is directly applicable or generalisable to the New Zealand Population,
- the degree of consistency demonstrated by the available evidence.

Where there are conflicting results, indicate how the group formed a judgement as to the overall direction of the evidence

2. Cost

Comment on:

- any economic costs associated with this service, product or procedure

3. Clinical impact

Comment on:

- the clinical impact eg size of population, magnitude of effect, relative benefit over other management options, resource implications, balance of risk and benefit

4. Equity, Maori/Pacific Health, Acceptability

Comment on the extent to which:

- the service, product or procedure reduces disparities in health status (equity of access, resources, health outcome),
- is consistent with the treaty of Waitangi and encourages Maori/ Pacific participation in providing and using service, product and procedures, and
- is consistent with values and expectations of New Zealanders.

5. Purchasing Options

List the possible purchasing options.

6. Evidence Statement

Summarise the advisory group's synthesis of evidence relating to this service, product or procedure, taking the above factors into account, and indicate the evidence level that applies.

7. Recommendations

What recommendation(s) does the advisory group draw from this evidence?