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## Introduction

### Special issue: Functional outcomes in rehabilitation

This journal edition examines critical issues in the evaluation of functional outcomes for rehabilitation populations, with particular focus on measurement principles and outcome domains. The appropriate measurement of functional abilities is crucial for rehabilitation interventions and planning, although current methods and measures are often inadequate due to problems in basic measurement theory and limited ecological validity. This journal edition presents information related to fundamental measurement theory and methods, as well as expanding concepts of functional outcome, with particular emphasis on special rehabilitation populations.

The first two articles present information regarding fundamental measurement and methodological issues in rehabilitation. Drs Fisher, Harvey, and Kilgore present rationale for changes in the fundamental measurement of functional abilities, which impact functional assessment, program evaluation, and outcomes analysis. Dr Longo's article reviews the history of Total Quality Management in medical settings, and provides arguments for its use in rehabilitation.

Issues in the conceptualization and measurement of outcome are presented in the next two articles. Drs Fraser and Wehman review and critique the evaluation of vocational outcomes. Similarly, Dr Farmer and Ms Clippard argue for the

expanded evaluation of educational outcome domains for children with disabilities, particularly related to inclusive environments and interdependence.

Articles by Drs Hart and Rintala and Drs Johnstone and Frank discuss issues in the measurement of functional outcome for spinal cord injury and cognitively impaired populations, respectively. Drs Hart and Rintala provide information on measurement of long-term physical and psychological factors associated with SCI. Our contribution is a discussion of appropriate and inappropriate uses of neuropsychological evaluation in rehabilitation. Finally, Ms Cherek and Mr Taylor provide information regarding insurers' perspectives on rehabilitation, illustrating basic differences/similarities between insurance and facility case management.

It is hoped that providing an integrated presentation on these issues will improve the measurement of functional abilities and subsequent treatment for rehabilitation populations, and ultimately assist in improving the ability of individuals with disabilities to resume productive, integrated lives.

*Robert G. Frank, Ph.D., Guest Editor*

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