

Surviving in Remote Communities

“Isolation and distance present challenges in areas such as sourcing and obtaining supplies and materials, servicing remote clients, maintaining and gaining knowledge about equipment, and networking with other professionals.” (Barnes, 1999:7)

Below are some ideas and considerations that may be helpful when prescribing equipment to individual's in remote areas:

- Consider maintaining a list of assistive technology that has been previously prescribed in the region. This may allow sharing of equipment for trials as well as generating information regarding maintenance requirements and issues for the particular equipment.
- Where appropriate, try to stay with the same or similar equipment. This may prevent confusion amongst carers/service providers and improve their confidence regarding the set up and correct use of the equipment. It may also reduce confusion regarding maintenance requirements.
- When prescribing, be aware that some homes may not have a reliable power source or an adequate water supply. This is particularly important when considering hoists, powered pressure care mattress, electric beds, shower hoses or water lifts. Consider non-powered options when appropriate.
- Where possible spend time with client's, carers and health workers to ensure they are confident with the set up and correct use of the equipment.
- Provide written, culturally appropriate instructions, with illustrations to carers. This will provide a future reference if the equipment prescriber visits infrequently. This may also help to reduce abandonment of equipment due to the client or carer being unsure about setting up or use of the equipment.



- Where possible prescribe equipment which does not rust. Stainless steel frames do not rust but tend to be heavy.
- Where possible opt for equipment with sealed ball bearings. This will prevent grime, dirt etc clogging up in the bearings.
- Solid tyres are also a good option where the wheelchair is to be used outside. Wider than normal tyres may also be an option if the user will be travelling over sand or softer surfaces.
- Consider equipment with fewer moving parts as these tend to have longer life.
- Rigid frame wheelchairs which also tend to last longer when used on rough terrain.

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- Consider access to maintenance when ordering equipment. Regular maintenance is essential in preventing premature breakdown of equipment.
- Learn about general equipment maintenance. LifeTec sells an 'Equipment Maintenance and Repairs' booklet covering basic maintenance which may be of assistance. LifeTec staff may also be able to provide an equipment maintenance and repairs inservice when visiting your area.
- Try to form links with local trades person's/community groups who may be able to assist with general maintenance.
- Consider if mounting of equipment may be an option. This may prevent equipment from being removed or lost. Remember however, that some individuals will have specific needs for portable equipment.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?

Telephone, fax or e-mail your enquiry to obtain further information from one of the therapists about products. Alternatively, you can make an appointment to trial the equipment at our display centres or through our outreach service. Please phone LifeTec for further details.

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