REHABILITATION: A PROFITABLE INVESTMENT FOR SOCIETY

STRATEGIC ORIENATIONS
2003-2005
REHABILITATION :
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FOR SOCIETY

L’Association des établissements de réadaptation en déficience physique du Québec (AÉRDPQ), known in English as the Quebec Association of Rehabilitation Establishments for the Physically Impaired, regroups 21 establishments located throughout Quebec from the health and social services network that offer specialized and ultra-specialized rehabilitation services. The Association’s primary mission is to promote and support access to rehabilitation services and to ensure that individuals with a motor, visual, hearing or speech and language impairment – whether congenital or acquired – receive the services they require to maintain or enhance their autonomy, as well as to maximize their potential in society.

Approximately 6,000 professionals work in these establishments using an interdisciplinary approach, with the goal of reducing and compensating for the disabilities of physically impaired individuals so they can lead full, active lives like all members of society. Rehabilitation establishments serve about 70,000 physically impaired people annually.

The Association and its members have defined strategic orientations and identified four major issues confronting the rehabilitation sector: offer of services, equity, social participation, and funding.

By proposing various solutions for each issue, the Association and its members demonstrate that rehabilitation establishments for physically impaired people form a part of the solution, and moreover, that rehabilitation of handicapped individuals is a profitable investment in both human and societal terms.
It is a recognized fact in the field of rehabilitation that early intervention speeds recovery, the maintenance or development of abilities, and the acquisition of new skills. However, specialized rehabilitation establishments OFFER OF SERVICES varies widely across Quebec. The coverage of services offered, as provided for in the Quebec Health and Social Services Act regarding the mission of rehabilitation establishments remains incomplete to this day. Due to a lack of funds, establishments cannot deliver all required specialized services to those who need them, and this occurs at all ages (0-110 years old) and in all four types of impairment (auditory, visual, motor, speech and language).

The improvement of first-line services has and will always have an impact on rehabilitation establishments. For example, the implementation of a universal auditory screening program for newborns would significantly and immediately increase demand for rehabilitation establishments’ specialized services required by the newborns diagnosed with hearing problems.

The Quebec Association of Rehabilitation Establishments for the Physically Impaired proposes various solutions to improve the offer of services in Quebec for all types of physically impaired individuals, thereby ensuring that the real contribution of rehabilitation establishments — key players in the continuum of services — is duly recognized.

TO ACTION

- Provide all physically impaired individuals with quality clinical and support services, as needed (range of services)
  So that specialized rehabilitation services are available and accessible everywhere in Quebec to all clients, regardless of age, place of residence, and nature or cause of their physical impairment.

- Strengthen inter-establishment links (vertical and horizontal integration) to ensure service continuity
  So that people do not have to “shop” for services, and as importantly, because specialized rehabilitation services help increase the potential for independence, decrease the length of hospital stays, and ease the intensity of home care services.

- Improve harmonization between first-line and specialized services
  Because strengthening first-line services necessarily increases demand for specialized rehabilitation services.

- Implement a client information system for physically impaired individuals (SIC-DP)
  Notably to reduce duplicate evaluations and facilitate the transmission of information between establishments.

- Capitalize on new technologies, such as teleconferencing in rehabilitation
  In particular, to make cutting-edge expertise developed in ultra-specialized rehabilitation services available in all regions of Quebec and to reduce travel for clients in outlying regions.
FROM STATEMENT...

It must be noted that some regions of Quebec are still deprived of certain rehabilitation services or programs, creating a serious **equity** problem. For example, clients with a visual impairment living in certain regions do not receive the same services as those in other regions better equipped with programs, services or professionals. The same situation exists for elderly people with a hearing impairment; not all regions can offer the specialized rehabilitation services these clients require.

Given the lack of both human and financial resources, thousands of physically impaired individuals are waiting for their first specialized rehabilitation service – more than 8,600 as of September 2002. Waiting times range from two months to three years. Some regions must contend with a shortage of trained individuals and recruitment difficulties in certain professions, among others difficulties are experienced with speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. One fact is clear, however: shortages exist in all the regions of Quebec.

The issue of equity in terms of access to specialized rehabilitation services is not restricted to the region or place of residence of the handicapped person, but extends to the cause of the impairment¹, its nature², the age of the clientele, and even to the presence or absence of third party funding (CSST, SAAQ, etc.).

The Quebec Association of Rehabilitation Establishments for the Physically Impaired proposes solutions aimed at ensuring that all physically impaired individuals in Quebec have access to specialized rehabilitation services as close as possible to their place of residence and as quickly as possible.

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1. Whether congenital or acquired.
2. Auditory, visual, motor, or speech and language impairment.

TO ACTION

- **Offer a range of specialized rehabilitation services in all regions of Quebec**
  
  So that every person with a physical impairment has access to the necessary and adequate specialized services to meet their needs.

- **Eliminate unacceptable waiting periods**
  
  To avoid harm to clients and to ensure that everyone with a physical impairment gains from the benefits of early intervention.

- **Contribute to the development and implementation of a human resources action plan (PMO) on local, regional and provincial levels**
  
  To ensure that services for physically impaired Quebecers are not compromised by a labour shortage in certain rehabilitation professions.
Handicapped individuals, like all members of society, must be viewed from several dimensions – personal and family, professional and social. From the outset, they must not be seen as “ill” but rather as living with chronic, significant disabilities.

From this point of view, the SOCIAL PARTICIPATION of physically impaired individuals is and should be everyone’s business. All those working in governmental ministries and agencies as well as in associations and other organizations should be involved in this fundamental issue and make their contribution in a clear and tangible manner.

There still exist too many obstacles impeding social participation of physically disabled people. Often unknown to the population at large, and even to decision-makers, these obstacles include an appalling lack of support services for integration. Thus, individuals with reduced mobility, for example, must wait more than four years for their homes to be adapted... Moreover, access to the workplace for handicapped people remains a major problem.

In order to optimize social integration of handicapped people, it is necessary, even essential, that legislators, backed by all involved, look at reducing barriers to integration before drafting laws or regulations. For example, it would certainly be more cost effective to establish handicap access standards before the construction of residential buildings or metro stations, than to have to implement modifications after completion.

When it comes to comprehending physical impairment, it appears that environmental considerations for the physically impaired population are often reduced to providing safe access to buildings and public spaces. However, access to communication and information, and by extension, to knowledge, is just as fundamental and important.

The Association therefore proposes various solutions to optimize the ability of physically impaired individuals to participate fully in society.

TO ACTION

- **Promote improved dialogue between governmental ministries, focusing on the needs of physically impaired individuals**
  
  Because social participation of the handicapped population is everyone’s business: the health and social services sector is a key player of course, but so are education, transportation, recreation, housing, commerce and industry, employment, etc.

- **Recommend that an authority be vested with inter-ministerial vigilance and coordination responsibility**
  
  Because true inter-ministerial coordination is essential to ensure that everyone is implicated and actively contributes to the reduction of social integration barriers for physically impaired individuals.

- **Ensure the availability of resources to support integration (home adaptation, education, transportation, etc.)**
  
  So that the social integration of physically impaired people becomes real participation: Do we wish to simply keep handicapped people at home, or do we want to offer them the means to fully participate in community life?

- **Expand environmental considerations to encompass communication and information, as well as access to buildings and public spaces**
  
  So as to allow individuals with functional limitations access to the internet, books and documents in alternate formats – in short, access to knowledge.
Rehabilitation: a profitable investment for all
- for the individual
- for the community

FROM STATEMENT...

It must be acknowledged from the outset that expenses in the health and social services sector are rising faster than are revenues. The funding of services is clearly an important issue. With respect to specialized rehabilitation services, the Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services acknowledged funding needs in the order of $100 million in its report published in 2000 on ministerial orientations concerning physically impaired people, corroborating the results of a 1999 study conducted by the Quebec Association of Rehabilitation Establishments for the Physically Impaired. In fact, the Ministry noted these needs in its “Legault Plan” in fall 2002.

Improving first-line services, notably in the area of screening, combined with the ageing of the population – it is recognized that about 10% of Canadians will one day be afflicted with a physical impairment – will have a definite and direct impact on the rehabilitation sector. Moreover, the deployment of new technologies, such as cochlear implants and a more efficient ambulance system, has, and will continue to have, repercussions on rehabilitation establishments in terms of increased demand for specialized rehabilitation services. Progress in neonatology offers a prime example of this trend: the rising survival rate of ever-smaller babies brings with it an increased risk of serious congenital impairments.

In such a context, the current lack of human and financial resources makes it difficult, and sometimes patently impossible, for rehabilitation establishments to reconcile the rights of physically impaired people with the delivery of required services.

Finally, optimizing the autonomy and social participation of physically impaired people is only possible if the government makes the required investments in this population to meet their recognized needs.

The Association proposes solutions that reflect its belief that rehabilitation is a profitable investment in both human and societal terms. Recognized as a means of optimizing autonomy, rehabilitation is part of the solution.

TO ACTION

- Demonstrate the profitability of rehabilitation
  - For the individual: Because optimizing the autonomy of physically impaired people has a positive impact on their quality of life and that of their family.
  - For the community: Because everyone wins if we accept the premise that for each dollar invested in rehabilitation, society saves seven.

- Obtain funding for services commensurate with needs
  So as to be able to respond to the unmet needs of physically impaired people, estimated and recognized to be $100 million.

- Protect this funding
  To ensure it is recurrent.

- Promote the creation of a disability fund
  To meet all the needs of physically impaired persons in a timely manner.

FUNDING
Given that physically impaired individuals are full-fledged citizens;

Given the substantial unmet needs of handicapped people;

Given the vital contribution made by rehabilitation establishments;

The Quebec Association of Rehabilitation Establishments for the Physically Impaired reaffirms, in its strategic orientations, the importance of the government, its partners and agencies as well as other organizations using their power and taking action so that all physically impaired individuals have access to the specialized rehabilitation services they require, close to where they live.

Have access to the specialized rehabilitation services they require, close to where they live.

Have fast and easy access to specialized rehabilitation services in their region.

Can live in their community and fully exercise their social roles.

AN ADEQUATE INVESTMENT IN REHABILITATION TO MEET ALL NEEDS IS A PROFITABLE INVESTMENT FOR SOCIETY
Rehabilitation establishments for physically impaired individuals:
key partners who are part of the solution

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REGION 11 - GASpÉSIe - ÎLES-DE-LA-MADELEINE

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