

Letter to Editor

Development of Paraplegia Kit : Safdarjang Experience

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Spinal cord injury is a devastating injury which inspite of the best management often leads to a life in wheel chair, not only this, these patients are threatened for the rest of their lives to develop complications like pressure sores, urinary complications etc.

Department of Rehabilitation, Safdarjang Hospital has been involved in the rehabilitation management of such patients for the last 20 years, it has a 15 bedded spinal injury unit with 10 male & 5 female beds. Patients are admitted on these beds after they are medically stable. Generally incomplete cervical lesions or lesions below that level are accommodated on these beds. While the patients is on rehabilitation bed, his medical condition is improved to maximum possible, further complications are prevented and patient is trained to live with the residual disability which includes physiotherapy, occupational therapy, provision of ambulatory aids and appliances. In addition to this, a unique feature of this department is to provide education to the patient and his attendant about the disability and how to cope with it through formal class room teaching. After the discharge patients are followed up in out patient spinal injury clinic held once a week. During the course of this exercise which is being undertaken at our department a selfcare kit consisting of certain useful equipment has been developed,

which is provided to these patients with the aim of preventing the serious complication and to facilitate their living.

This kit consists of four components :-

Name of equipment

- A. Wheel chair foam cushion (seat & back)**
 - B. Catheter kit with leg bag & condoms**
 - 1. Plastic catheter
K-90 for men
K-91 for women
 - 2. Xylocaine jelly
 - 3. Plastic box
 - 4. Measuring glass (upto 750ml capacity)
 - 5. Two small bowls
 - C. Folding commode chair**
 - D. Personal hygiene kit**
 - 1. Sports shoe with padded inside
 - 2. White bath towels - 1 large
 - 3. Hand towels - 2
 - 4. Nail cutter - 1
 - 5. Tooth brush, tooth paste
 - 6. Oil
 - 7. Hair comb
 - 8. Cotton socks gray - 2
 - 9. Woollen socks upto knee - 2
 - 10. Looking mirror with long handle
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A. Wheel Chair Foam Cushion

This, developed at the department, consists of a piece of 6mm commercial grade plywood of the size of wheel chair (16" x 16") on which is pasted 3" good density rubber sheet over which 1" sponge foam of good density (26/28) is pasted.

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The whole thing is covered by linen cloth and over it leather foam is incorporated and finally loose matting cloth cover is provided. Similarly a back cushion is prepared having a thickness of 2". The varying density of rubber and foam covering prevents spoiling of the rubber & foam due to accidental soakage. The mat covering prevents direct contact of the skin with leather foam, as well as takes care of perspiration, and being a loose covering it is washable and can be changed easily. As is universally known that merely providing a cushion does not ensure prevention of ischial sores, therefore our patients are trained to practice push-ups at a regular interval.

B. Catheter Kit

As we all know, self intermittent catheterization is a universally acceptable procedure of urinary drainage in SCI patients. Patients are trained in the procedure of SCI by using catheter kit after draining the bladder by credes manouver or by tapping technique.

C. Folding Commode Chair

Since in our set up most of the patients come from rural background they are ordinarily accustomed to ease themselves in the fields and usually they do not have any toilet in the house. After getting the spinal injury they are dependent on others for the toilet activity to be performed in

the bed. With the aim to make the patient independent in toilet activity a simple easily available folding steel chair has been modified into a commode chair and in our practice we have found it a very useful aid, in regaining independence in toileting activities in SCI patients.

D. Personal Hygiene Kit

Maintenance of a high standard of personal hygiene can not be over emphasized in SCI patients because they are prone to recurrent infections. With that aim and keeping in view their problem of bladder and bowel incontinence a set of personal hygiene equipments has been incorporated in paraplegic kit. Nail cutter need special mention as regular clipping of nail is of vital importance in these patients otherwise there may be a chance of injury in the anal mucosa (while stimulating bowel evacuation or doing digital evacuation). Thus providing an item worth Rs. 5/- to the patient can save him from a grave complication like trophic ulcers and also regulates the temperature of the part by external means. In addition to all these benefits the use of personal hygiene kit also ensures better look of the patient which increases his acceptance in the community.

Total cost of the kit works out to about Rs. 1500/-.