ICF as the Model for Rehabilitation

Gerold Stucki, MD, MS

Co-Chair FDRG, WHO FIC

Professor and Chair, Department of Health Sciences and Health Policy
University of Lucerne, Switzerland

Director, Swiss Paraplegic Research, Nottwil, Switzerland

Director, ICF Research Branch, WHO FIC CC Germany
Non enim vivere bonum est sed bene vivere

What is good is not just living, but living well ...

(Seneca, Epistulae Morales 70, 4)
Public Health Goal #1: Survival

Preventive Strategy
Prevention of health conditions

Curative Strategy
Cure, Remission
Disease Control

Fries JF, NEJM, 1980
Public Health Goal #2: Functioning

Education Strategy

Rehabilitative Strategy
- Impairment and Symptom Control
- Capacity Building
- Participation and Inclusion

Supportive Strategy
- Assistance, Palliation

Related goals
- Quality of Life
- Autonomy
- Fair opportunities
Rehabilitation, the third Health Strategy


Up-date to be published in the JRM, 2011
The report defines rehabilitation as a set of measures that assist individuals who experience or are likely to experience disability to achieve and maintain optimal functioning in interaction with their environments.
Chapter 4, Rehabilitation, WRD

Rauch A et al.,
How to apply the ICF for rehabilitation management in clinical practice.
Case Studies

The following case studies of patients with spinal cord injuries show the manifold strengths of the Rehab Cycle in clinical practice. The individuals portrayed in these cases differ in regard to the nature and cause of their injuries and the height of the lesion.

1. Goal Setting
2. Independence
3. Hope
4. Health Behavior
5. SCI in the Elderly
6. Recovery after traumatic SCI
7. Vocations
8. Community Reintegration
9. Sports in Rehabilitation
Implementation of the ICF in Human Functioning and Rehabilitation Research
Taking stock: uneven progress

Define problem

Develop & evaluate interventions

Implementation & scaling up

Unintentional injury prevention

Violence prevention

Disability and rehabilitation

Trauma and emergency care
Comprehensive Approach based on the WHO’s ICF

Biomedical Approach

Basic Sciences  Applied Sciences  Professional Sciences

Developing Epidemiological Studies of people’s lived experience: The Swiss Spinal Cord Injury Cohort Study (SwiSCI) as a case in point.
Mapping the human diseasome

National Academies Press; Goh et al, 2009
Informal social relationships
Relating with strangers
Formal relationship
Complex interpersonal interaction
Basic interpersonal interaction
Looking after ones health
Community life
Acquire place to live
Acquisition of goods and services
Basic economic transactions
Economic self-sufficiency
Non-remunerative employment
Assisting others
Using transportation
Driving
Moving around using equipment
Doing housework
Caring for household objects
Preparing meals
Preparing food
Using transportation
Remunerative employment
Apprenticeship
Acquiring, keeping & terminating a job
Epidemiology of Functioning
Prof. Harvey Fineberg  
U.S. Institute of Medicine

“Today's investments in rehabilitation research are investments in improved rehabilitation care in the future”