

Development areas within rehabilitation, new challenges

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Medical treatment for neuromuscular diseases requires a necessary knowledge of the individual diagnosis. It has been necessary to describe these diseases on the basis of diagnostic criteria, epidemiology, gene localisation, genetic defect description, genetic product (protein), protein function, animal models and experiments, patient trials, treatment, and the effect of treatment.

Traditional rehabilitation of people with neuromuscular diseases requires knowledge of the disease (phenotype) on the part of the therapist and the user. This has involved user education, physiotherapy, corset treatment, psychology, schools, CPAP treatment, developing wheelchairs, the layout of homes, scoliosis operations, the use of respirators, communication, and medical treatment.

However, the idea of rehabilitation involves more than medical treatment, physical training and the provision of aids. It requires lifelong, coordinated health, social, training, and vocational measures.

Rehabilitation in connection with chronic diseases lasts for life, and plans must be made from the time the diagnosis is made and for the rest of the patient's life.

The concept of functional rehabilitation is more recent, and is described in the UN's standard rules from 1990 and in the EU's Helios programmes from 1996.

To achieve success with medical treatment and various forms of traditional interventions, they must be placed in the context of functional rehabilitation.