

2008 NDTA Gait Conference
Cincinnati, OH

In keeping with its mission to provide specialized clinical training to health care professionals, the NDTA sponsored a specialty conference on gait in November, 2008 in Cincinnati, OH. The conference provided attendees with a focused look at typical gait patterns and then examined atypical patterns frequently associated with upper motor neuron lesions. Dr. Kathleen Ganley, PhD, PT, Assistant Professor of PT at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff presented the information on gait. Her presentations gave the attendees the opportunity to examine the inter-relationships between body segments and the forces acting on those segments both internally and externally. Given the busy schedules of therapists, it was a rare opportunity to spend time carefully examining and discussing these relationships and gaining a deeper understanding of the biomechanical implications of brain injury on this basic functional activity.

In addition, a lab practicum provided attendees with hands-on experience measuring gait speed & step length as possible parameters for documenting progress. Problem solving causes for gait variations seen in normal subjects helped to sharpen observational skills and reinforce concepts discussed earlier in the lectures.

Among the highlights of the conference were the lab experiences led by NDTA instructors, Lois Bly, MA, PT and Nicky Schmidt, PT. These labs explored possible treatment options for a variety of functional gait limitations and again provided hands-on practical experience implementing treatment strategies under the supervision of NDTA instructors. Conference attendees rated these lab experiences very highly.

Partial body weight supported treadmill training is of great interest to therapists currently as the profession continues to move toward evidence based treatment practices. Philip Koch, PT presented his research findings using this treatment in the pediatric population and answered questions about the implementation of such programs.

Conference topics also included a section on dynamic bracing presented by Don Buethorn, Orthotist of Cascade Prosthetics & Orthotics and Nicki Schmidt. A variety of dynamic orthotic options were presented along with the rationale for decision making when selecting the best option for a patient.

Vendor booths were available in the conference hall for attendees to visit. Vendors contributed to the overall conference experience by demonstrating various medical equipment and devices that enhance our treatment and contribute to optimal outcomes.

The conference was well received by the 68 attendees who rated it very highly in satisfaction and met expectations. Conference attendees were very happy with the content of presentations and the ability to apply information provided in lab settings. All in all the conference was a great success and the NDTA looks forward to our next conference, Swallowing and Feeding Across the Lifespan to be held on March 13 – 15, 2009 in Chicago, IL.