

Physiotherapy for patients with upper limb loss or absence

Recommendations for practice at Roehampton Rehabilitation Centre

There are currently no national standards of practice for physiotherapy for patients with upper limb loss or absence. A retrospective audit carried out in 2005 by PIRPAG (Physiotherapy Inter Regional Prosthetic Audit Group) for the Thames Region identified varying physiotherapy practices and referral patterns, and different perceptions of the physiotherapist's role in the management of these patients. The audit highlighted that there is a role for physiotherapy and PIRPAG recommends that each Centre introduces and establishes standards in relation to local needs and resources. The present of local standards will facilitate future audits and the development of clinical practice.

Therefore, based on current clinical practice and following the findings from the PIRPAG audit 2005 and subsequent audit May 2009, the following recommendations are made:

1. All patients with congenital loss or absence of upper limbs to be routinely seen by a specialist physiotherapist. The patient will be seen at
 - a. The primary appointment or
 - b. When the patient attends for their first OT appointment or
 - c. If an established amputee presents with musculo-skeletal dysfunction
2. Following assessment by the physiotherapist the patient will
 - a. Receive advice and information regarding management of the residual limb (and the remaining arm in the case of the single amputee) and any associated disabilities or problems
 - b. Receive appropriate physiotherapy in relation to identified clinical needs for both residual limb and remaining arm, and any associated disabilities or problems
 - c. Be referred onwards for further physiotherapy as necessary e.g. local out-patients
3. The physiotherapist will liaise closely with both the OT and prosthetist regarding overall prosthetic management
 - a. Patients will be reviewed as necessary by the physiotherapist when attending for routine prosthetic rehabilitation
4. Upper limb patients and/or their carers are encouraged to receive physiotherapy advice and information at any stage of their rehabilitation or attendance at the Centre
5. The physiotherapist will provide a short summary of intervention in the prosthetic file following any episode of care

July 2009

July 2009