

Manual Wheelchair for People with diabetes: Experts' Opinion on Indications for Wheelchair Adjustments

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Introduction: Individuals with diabetes may require the use of a manual wheelchair due to mobility limitations. However, there are currently no guidelines for wheelchair adjustments tailored to the diabetic population.

Objectives: To describe relevant manual wheelchair adjustments for adults with diabetes, and to explore how these adjustments apply to populations living in less-resourced countries.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 wheelchair experts from five different countries who work with adults with diabetes. Interviews were analysed using a constant comparison method.

Results: The wheelchair adjustments most frequently mentioned by our experts were those related to neuropathies, skin integrity, decreased strength and amputations. Air cushions were preferred for managing seat sores. Lightweight wheelchairs could be advantageous for people with decreased strength and endurance. In less-resourced settings, wheelchair adjustment decisions prioritized durability and low maintenance.

Conclusion: The recommendation of lightweight wheelchairs for adults with diabetes may be limited by the lack of adjustment possibilities compared to regular weight wheelchairs. In less-resourced settings, prioritizing durability and low maintenance may limit prevention and management of conditions associated with diabetes. This study represents a first step towards the development of guidelines for manual wheelchair adjustments specifically tailored to adults with diabetes, in a global health context.