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Abstracts from the Annual Meeting of the European Academy of
Childhood-onset Disability (EACD)

University of Galway, Ireland

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Conclusion: The presence of spousal support was identified as a key supportive factor transforming the caregiving experience. Single caregivers struggle with a “mother-centered life,” occupational burden, loss of self, and social isolation. In contrast, dual caregivers develop solidarity within family dynamics through “task sharing” and “emotional exchange.” However, due to prevailing social norms, the occupational burden remains mother-centered in both groups.

Oral Abstract

Robotic facilitated gait training in cerebral palsy Gross Motor Function Classification System level children and young adults

Magdalena Cena¹, Marek Józwiak²

¹Pediatric Rehabilitation Centre, Wiktor Dega Orthopedic and Rehabilitation Hospital, Poznan, Poland, Poznań, Poland; ²Poznan University of Medical Science, Pediatric Rehabilitation Centre, Pediatric Orthopedic and Traumatology Department, Wiktor Dega Orthopedic and Rehabilitation Hospital, Poznan, Poland, Poznań, Poland

Introduction: The aim of the study is to assess the impact of robotically facilitated gait training (RFGT) on gait velocity (GV) in children and adolescents with cerebral palsy (CP) at Gross Motor Function Classification System (GMFCS) level I (aged 6–20 years).

Patients and Methods: The study included two groups: participants with no experience in robotic therapy (Robotic Naive [RN], $n = 39$) and participants with experience (Robotic Experienced [RE], $n = 49$). GV was measured before and after the intervention. Additionally, the impact of age, gender and type of CP were analyzed. The ANOVA test was used to assess the significance of the differences, and Fisher's test was used to compare the percentage of participants achieving clinically significant improvement in GV (≥ 0.1 m/s).

Results: RE participants achieved higher final GV compared to RN group (mean GV prior and post interventions respectively: 1.35 m/s vs 1.28 m/s, $p < 0.05$). Grouping participants by age showed that the greatest improvement was observed in adolescents (13–16 and 17–20 years), regardless of experience. The percentage of participants with clinically significant improvement in GV was higher in the RE group (RE 82% vs RN 76%, $p = 0.03$). Gender and type of CP did not have a significant impact on the results ($p > 0.05$).

Conclusion: The results suggest that improving GV should consider RFGT in children and adolescents with CP at GMFCS level I as a valuable key therapeutic element. Clinical factors, such as gender or disease form, did not show a statistically significant effect.

Oral Abstract

The caregiving paradox: Reduced emotional support and fewer interpersonal conflicts in informal social networks

Milena Milićević

Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade, Serbia

Introduction: Family and social relationships play a crucial role in sustaining caregivers' well-being, yet the relational impact of caregiving within the household remains under-explored. This retrospective study compared perceived emotional and practical support between caregivers of household members with disability or long-term illness and a control group of non-caregivers from the general population.

Patients and Methods: Using data extracted from the Social Support module of the UK Household Longitudinal Study (2022–2024), we analysed perceived positive support (understanding, reliance, communication) and negative interaction (criticism, disappointment, irritation) across three relational domains (spouse/partner, immediate family, friends; 4-point scale). Analysis used t -tests and Eta-squared statistics.

Results: Caregivers ($n = 2,669$, 59% female) reported significantly lower perceived support from spouses/partners, family, and friends than non-caregivers ($n = 26,328$, 55% female). Among partnered participants, caregivers reported somewhat lower perceived emotional support, particularly in the areas of feeling understood, reliance, and openness ($p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.005$ – 0.013). They also reported fewer negative partner interactions (e.g. feeling let down, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.003$). Similar patterns were observed for family relationships: caregivers perceived less understanding, reliability, and openness, but fewer negative interactions (e.g. feeling let down; all $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 \leq 0.004$). Differences in friend support were smaller but consistent: caregivers reported less understanding, reliability, and openness ($p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 \leq 0.002$), yet no significant group differences emerged for negative friendship interactions.

Conclusion: Household caregiving appears linked to modestly reduced emotional support but fewer conflicts, highlighting the need for interventions that strengthen communication, emotional connection, and well-being in caregiving families.

Oral Abstract

Writing in the digital age: Handwriting versus typing in adolescents with handwriting difficulties

Melissa Prunty^{1,2}, Anna Barnett³, Emma Sumner⁴, Nichola Stuart³, Kasia Furmaniak², Codie Flanders²

¹University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland; ²Brunel University of London, Uxbridge, UK; ³Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK; ⁴Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK